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FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

BRAVE BILLY BLAND,
OR HUSTLING UP A BUSINESS.
BY A SELF MADE MAN.



"Don't take his sass, Sloppy. Shove him off the dock!" said the tough who had Billy's umbrella and suitcase. Sloppy dashed at the boy to carry out the suggestion. Billy dropped like a shot, and Sloppy tripped over him into the water.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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BRAVE BILLY BLAND

OR,

HUSTLING UP A BUSINESS

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

ON THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF.

"Gosh! That's an awful climb up these rocks," ejaculated Billy Bland, as, with a sigh of satisfaction, he reached the top of a beetling cliff, three hundred feet high. "A fellow could get a nice fall from here," he added, looking down the ticklish, steep path he had just traversed with some difficulty and a great deal of labor. "When the tide is out there are a nice lot of hard rocks to land on. It's flood now, and you can't see 'em. Now, if I'd taken the cliff road yonder I'd have saved myself all this trouble, but I thought I could get to town by the shorter route. At any rate, I was told I could; but the party forgot to tip me off to the fact that when the tide is in this projecting cliff cuts you off. Well, such is luck! I'll rest myself here awhile and then finish my journey by the road, which runs down hill from this point."

Billy sat down in the shadow of a huge boulder and mopped his heated face.

The sea breeze which gently swept that elevated aerie felt pleasant to his senses and helped to cool him off.

Before him lay the boundless shimmering ocean off the coast of Maine, stretching to the distant horizon, dotted here and there with the white sails of a coaster.

Behind, and to his right and left, was a rising plateau, sparsely covered with summer verdure, and thickly sprinkled with stunted pines, firs and cedars.

Across the plateau, a few hundred yards back, ran the cliff road, like a dirty yellow ribbon, leading to the town of Barclay, one of the many small seaports of the State.

The town was not over a mile away, but not the slightest evidence of its presence could be seen from the spot where Billy Bland sat.

Indeed, nothing could be seen but the sea, the air alive with wheeling gulls, the trees and the bald rocks.

It was a lonesome spot, although almost in touch with the busy factories and other establishments that kept the majority of the inhabitants of Barclay on the jump from one year's end to the other.

While Billy sat and rested himself, and perhaps thought of the object which had drawn him to that locality, two young people of opposite sex, about Billy's age, came walking lazily across the plateau toward the edge of the cliffs.

Their course soon brought them close to the giant boulder, which hid the boy, his suit-case and his umbrella from their view, just as it hid them from him.

The girl was a lovely creature of perhaps sixteen years.

She was dressed in a stylishly cut white lawn gown, short enough to escape contact with the low grass.

Her thick, blond hair was piled up under a gypsy straw hat, while a light-colored sunshade protected her from the sun.

Her companion was a well-built, good-looking lad of eighteen, attired in a smart summer suit, with a straw hat, tan shoes, cut low, and fancy socks.

In his hand he carried a light rattan, with which he made frequent slashes at the grass and stones along his path.

His face wore a sulky, ill-humored look, which indicated that he was not in a cheerful temper.

The girl's face, on the contrary, wore an air of happy indifference.

The pair had not spoken since shortly after leaving the road, but the young fellow now broke the silence, and thus Billy suddenly became aware that he was not alone.

"I don't see why you persist in treating me with such indifference, Nellie," said the boy, grumpily, as they came to a stop at the boulder.

"Why, I don't see that I'm treating you any differently than I always have, George Thorndike," replied the girl, placidly.

"Yes, you are. You're not near as nice to me as you

once were. Have you found somebody you like better? If you have——"

He paused with almost a hiss.

"Well, if I have, what then?" laughed the girl, tantalizingly.

"I won't stand for it, that's all," he replied, in an ugly tone.

"Won't you? Well, I'm sorry. I'm not aware that it is necessary for me to consult you as to who I shall like or not like," replied the girl, with sudden dignity.

"Nellie, you'll make me do something desperate if you keep on this way," said the youth, passionately.

The young lady burst into a rippling laugh.

"Don't be ridiculous, George Thorndike," she said.

"Ridiculous!" cried the boy, fiercely. "That's right, keep on till something happens that will make you sorry for your attitude towards me."

"George Thorndike, aren't you ashamed of yourself? If I thought you were going to work yourself into such a disagreeable humor I'd not have come out walking with you. If you don't want me to like you even less than I do now you'd better change your deportment. You are becoming positively unbearable."

"Nellie, I can't stand this kind of talk from you. You know I care for you more than for any other girl in the world. You know it, don't you? You know that I love you dearly, so dearly that the very idea of you smiling at anybody else drives me almost crazy."

"George Thorndike, what are you talking about? Are you losing your senses? The idea of you talking about love. Why, you are only a boy at school. What does either of us know about love? Let us talk about something else, please."

"Talk about something else! Why, I brought you out here on purpose to tell you how much I cared for you. To tell you that I cannot live without your love. That you are absolutely necessary to my happiness. Who else is better fitted to be your husband than I? Your father and mine have been in business together for years. As soon as I am through with my education I shall be admitted as junior partner in the firm. When, in the course of events, our parents die, I will be the whole firm. What better match could any girl desire for herself?"

"Do you imagine that all a girl marries for is wealth and position? I have both, as it is, through my father and mother. But even if I had not do you think I would marry you to get them unless I cared more for you than for what you offered me? Never! When I marry it will be to a man I have learned to love with all my heart, even though he be poor in worldly possessions. That is the only road to happiness, and what is wealth and position unless it goes hand-in-hand with happiness?"

"But I will make you happy. I will devote my whole life to the gratification of your slightest wish. I will surround you with every luxury that money can buy. I will——"

"I wish you would change the subject. It does not interest me," she replied, impatiently.

"Does not interest you?"

"No. I have never thought of love, except perhaps as a blissful something of the future—something that was as yet a mystery to me, and would, in its own good time, come

along, catching me unawares, perhaps, as I have heard it frequently does. At present I know nothing whatever about it, nor does the lack of the knowledge worry me in the least. Love is evidently not essential to happiness at all times, for I am perfectly happy now without it. I doubt if you have any idea what it really means yourself. You have simply got some foolish notion about me in your head. Unless you get rid of it and act like a sensible boy, I shall really feel compelled to see you as little as possible hereafter."

The girl spoke in a thoroughly matter-of-fact way, and there wasn't any doubt but she meant what she said.

"Listen to me, Nellie!" cried the youth, passionately. "I am no child to be made fun of. I am almost a man. In three years I will be legally one."

"Yes, three years will make a great change in both of us. Perhaps you will understand your own mind by that time."

"I understand it now as much as I will then—as I ever will."

"How can you? You are yet a schoolboy, with a lot to learn."

"A schoolboy! I shall go to college next fall. You know I have just graduated from the academy. I have a better education now than most boys get. When I get through college I'll know everything."

The girl smiled.

"I hope you will. I trust you will do better at college than you have at the academy."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, you know you did not make a great success at your studies."

"Who says I didn't?" snorted Thorndike, angrily.

"Why, you were so backward that nobody expected you would graduate this year."

"Is that so? Well, I did graduate, didn't I? That shows what people know," said the youth, with an angry sneer.

"Perhaps you would have been kept back if your father hadn't used his influence in your behalf," said the girl, with refreshing frankness.

"Look here, Nellie, I didn't bring you out here to talk over school matters. The academy is a thing of the past with me. I am almost a man, and I have made up my mind to marry you when I return from college with all my honors. Now I want you to promise to wait for me. I want you to promise that you will marry me when I become a member of the firm."

The girl looked at him with a curl on her pretty lip.

"So you have really made up your mind to marry me?" she said.

"Yes, I have," he said, doggedly. "I have spoken to my father about it and he told me that nothing would suit him better."

"Indeed. Suppose I don't care to marry you? I presume I have as much to say on the subject as you have. I believe it takes two to make a bargain."

"But there is no reason why you shouldn't marry me, and every reason why you should."

"I disagree with you. I think I have expressed my sentiments clearly enough for you to understand. To make myself plainer I will tell you that I think the most unlikely thing that ever will happen is our marriage. There

is nothing about you that attracts me. It is your own fault if I have to be so frank. I associate with you because you are the son of my father's partner, and to that extent my social equal. Beyond that I have no interest in you. You do not possess the qualities that I believe I shall look for in the man I shall wish for my husband. Under these circumstances you will oblige me by dropping the subject and not bringing it up again."

George Thorndike listened to the girl with whitening face.

It was impossible that he could misunderstand her meaning.

"This is your answer," he said in a tense tone.

"It is all I have to say on the subject," she replied, with dignity.

"Then listen to me. I have sworn that you shall marry me or nobody—do you understand?"

"George Thorndike, how dare you!" cried the indignant girl.

"I have sworn it, I tell you. Now you will promise—you will swear right here that you will marry me some day or I will fling you over this cliff. I mean it, by Heaven I do! I love you as no one else can ever love you, and I am determined to have you. You will promise or you will make a murderer of me. I always have had my own way, and I won't be balked in the most important matter I have ever set my heart upon. Think well before you refuse, Nellie Carter. You have maddened me by your indifference, and I am desperate. Your life hangs on your consent."

Thorndike seized the startled girl by the arm and dragged her to the very edge of the cliff before she realized the reality of her peril.

Then she opened her mouth to scream.

"Utter a cry and it will be your last," he hissed, gripping her tighter.

The girl's face blanched.

"One false step—a slip or push, would hurl her to certain death.

She gazed with distended eyes into his cold and glittering orbs, relentless in their awful determination.

There was murder in his soul at that moment, and she read the fact in his face as clearly as though the brand of Cain were already stamped on his forehead.

"Let me go, George Thorndike—let me go. You frighten me. Think what would happen if the edge of this cliff were to give way. We should both be——"

"I care not if I go down myself," he said, desperately. "What is life to me without you? Your answer. Is it Yes or No?"

"Spare me! Oh, Heaven, you must be mad!" she screamed.

"Yes or no, do you hear?" he hissed.

"It is no, you young scoundrel!" cried Billy Bland, stepping forward and tearing the fainting girl from his grasp. "And if you don't skip I'll knock the blazes out of you in two shakes of a lamb's tail."

CHAPTER II

BILLY MAKES HIMSELF SOLID WITH NELLIE CARTER

Nellie Carter was saved, and the revulsion of feeling was such that she sank nerveless in Billy's arms.

Her head rested on his stalwart shoulder, and a heavy strand of her golden hair brushed his cheek.

The picture that met Thorndike's gaze fairly maddened that youth.

He recognized the fact that Billy was a stranger in the neighborhood, and that was the only bit of satisfaction he could extract out of the situation.

"Who are you?" he cried. "And what do you mean by interfering between me and that young lady?"

"My name is Billy Bland, at your service, you cowardly cur, and you ought to thank me for saving you from the possible commission of a crime," was the reply.

As he spoke Nellie Carter, recovered her self-possession and disengaged herself from his half embrace.

"I thank you for coming to my aid," she said, flashing a look at Billy from her glorious eyes that made his heart beat faster. "I am very grateful to you, indeed I am."

"I believe you, miss. You must have had an awful scare. This friend of yours took a very unmanly advantage of you, and he deserves to be called to account for it."

"He is no longer a friend of mine. From this moment George Thorndike, never dare to approach me. I never did think much of you, and now I despise you," said the girl, looking at her late escort with the utmost contempt.

Thorndike seemed to shrink under her scathing glance; but only for a moment.

Taking a step forward he shook his fist at Billy.

"I'll get square with you for this if I die for it," he said, hoarsely. "As for you, Nellie Carter, don't think you've heard the last of this. If you do not marry me I will kill you as surely as there is a heaven above us."

The girl shuddered at the vindictive intensity of his speech and manner.

"Look here, young fellow, if you were not a born idiot you wouldn't make such a threat in the presence of a witness," said Billy. "Don't you know that the young lady's father could have you arrested for expressing yourself in such a way?"

"I want no advice from you. I can look after myself. The best thing you can do is to take yourself off. You're not wanted here," said Thorndike.

"And leave the young lady to your tender mercy, I suppose," replied Billy. "Not if I know it, or unless the young lady requests me to do so."

"No, no; I want nothing more to do with this boy. If you are willing to do me one more favor I will ask you to see me a little way on the road to Barclay."

"I am quite at your service, Miss Carter. I am on my way to Barclay myself. It will give me great pleasure to see you to your home if you care to have me go that far with you," said Billy, lifting his hat.

"Thank you. I appreciate your kindness very much, and will avail myself of it. I can see that you are not only a young gentleman, but a brave boy as well," she said, with a winsome smile, that made Thorndike wildly jealous.

"Wait, wait," he hissed. "I will fix you, you loafer."

"I think you have already fixed yourself. I wouldn't stand in your shoes at this moment for a gold mine," said Billy.

He walked over to the boulder, picked up his umbrella and suitcase, and announced that he was ready to proceed.

Nellie Carter took her place by his side, and together they walked toward the road, followed by the baleful glare in Thorndike's eyes.

"Blast him! I wonder who he is?" he muttered. "A stranger I can see. Perhaps a summer boarder. Yet why should he be here on the cliffs a mile from town with his grip and umbrella? He must have walked over from Eastport. A chap who will walk that distance can't amount to much. He's probably some common mechanic bound for Barclay after a job. And to think that Nellie would lower herself so much as to walk with such a person. So she has cut me now! She says she'll have nothing more to do with me. Very well. We shall see—we shall see."

Thus speaking he moved off toward the road himself with his face as dark as a thunder-cloud.

Billy moved on ahead with Nellie Carter by his side.

He was delighted at the honor of having so lovely a companion.

Billy was as lively a youth as trod on two feet.

He had been a rattling good shortstop on a bush league baseball team of some reputation, and he might have broken into fast company, for a certain major league scout had taken favorable notice of his work, had not fate stepped in and directed his energies into another channel.

Only a week before the opening of this story he was scooping hot liners, and making rifleshoot throws to first, with no thought of not finishing the season in uniform on the diamond.

Now he was out of it, after parting from a disgruntled manager, who felt he would have to square the team's loss somehow with the home fans.

It was too soon yet for the agile Billy to get rid of sundry little mannerisms connected with the ball business.

The way he carried his suitcase and his umbrella would have attracted the attention of a veteran.

He wasn't conscious of the fact, but the kink was there just the same.

Billy's tongue was as lively as any other part of his anatomy.

He had Nellie going before they reached the road, and long before the angry Thorndike lost sight of the pair they were talking together like old chums.

He had introduced himself as plain Billy Bland, and declared that nobody, even his mother, had called him William as far back as he could remember, and he guessed he could recollect one or two things that happened in his presence when he was three years old, which was going some.

Nellie was simply charmed with him, and she found herself taking more interest in him than she usually did in boys whose social condition entitled them to her consideration.

Then her curiosity induced her to inquire what had brought her escort to that neighborhood.

"Are you here to spend a week or two's vacation, Mr. Bland?" she asked.

"No, Miss Carter. I am here in response to a letter from my uncle, who lives on the outskirts of Barclay. He feels that he's growing old and he wants me to help him look after his business."

"Indeed," she replied, feeling pleased that he was going to remain for an indefinite time in town. "Then I

may expect to enjoy the pleasure of an occasional visit from you."

"It will give me great pleasure to call on you if you care to have me do so," he replied.

"Why, of course, I shall be delighted to have you call. Although we have become acquainted in a rather informal way, still the service you have rendered me entitles you to the gratitude and consideration of my parents and myself. I believe George Thorndike would have thrown me from the cliff if I had refused to do as he wished me to."

"Surely he wouldn't have gone so far as that—he, the son of your father's business partner? Although his words and manner indicated that he was desperately in earnest, I had no idea that he meant to do more than frighten you into complying with his desires to marry him."

"I never before thought he was such a wicked boy," she said. "I have known him to be self-willed and overbearing in his deportment, and not a boy whose society had any great charms for me; but I did not dream he would dare treat me in the way he did this afternoon. I shall never notice him again, and my parents will be surprised and angry when I tell them about his behavior," said the girl. "They will feel as grateful to you as I do for rescuing me from a perilous situation, and if my father can be of any service to you in any way it will afford him much pleasure to return in part the obligation you have placed us all under."

"I hope neither you nor your parents will worry about the obligation. It was my duty to stand between you and the cowardly aggression of a fellow who has no better principles than to try to bulldoze a young lady who trusted herself to his protection as an escort," said Billy.

In this way the two young people, so strangely introduced to each other, passed the time that it took them to reach the gate of a handsome residence standing back from a shaded street in the midst of extensive and well-kept grounds.

Here Billy was about to say good-by when Miss Carter insisted on his coming in and meeting her mother, who was seated on the wide veranda.

After some hesitation he did so.

Mrs. Carter was surprised to see her daughter in the company of a stranger, but she acknowledged the introduction with well-bred courtesy.

Nellie lost no time in explaining all that had happened between her and young Thorndike on the cliffs, and her mother was horrified at the recital, for the girl did not mince the matter in the least, and insisted that she believed Thorndike would have murdered her but for Billy Bland's intervention, even if he repented the deed the moment after he committed it.

Mrs. Carter hardly knew how to express herself on the matter, but she did not forget to thank Billy in the most grateful way for the service he had rendered her daughter.

Billy won his way into her good books by his gentlemanly and vivacious ways, which had already captured her daughter, and when he said he would have to go, she seconded Nellie's repeated invitation to call on them soon again, which Billy assured them he would.

Finding that to reach his uncle's home he would have to walk all the way around the crescent-shaped harbor on which the town faced, Billy thought he would see if

he could find a boatman to row him directly across the little harbor.

With that purpose in view he walked down to the nearest wharf.

CHAPTER III

BILLY'S ACCURATE THROW

George Thorndike, while a young gentleman in outward appearance, had shown that he was not one by nature.

His parents and friends did not dream, however, that he associated on the quiet with a tough element in Barclay.

As a matter of fact, he had very low tastes for the son of one of the town's best and richest citizens.

Many a night found him hail-fellow-well-met with a bunch of disreputable men and boys who made their headquarters at a salon close to the waterfront.

Here he was learning to drink, and play card games, and otherwise deport himself in a way that would have been regarded as scandalous by those who recognized his real station in Barclay society.

Thorndike followed Nellie Carter and Billy Bland at a distance into town, and he saw the young stranger accept the girl's invitation to enter the Carter grounds.

"So this chap is following up his acquaintance with Nellie," he muttered. "I must hang around and see where he goes after he leaves the Carter place. Then when I know where he can be found I will see about pickling him."

As Billy remained nearly an hour with Nellie and her mother, Thorndike grew more and more impatient for him to make his appearance.

At length he came out on the sidewalk and started for the waterfront.

Thorndike followed him, wondering where he was bound.

Billy's route led him down to the very wharf at the head of which stood the saloon where Thorndike met his tough cronies.

He began to look for a boatman, for he saw two or three rowboats floating idly alongside of the wharf.

While he was doing this, Thorndike entered the saloon and found, as he expected, three of his friends there playing cards at a table.

He knew they would undertake any dirty trick he offered to pay for, and so he quickly told the rascals what he wanted them to do for him.

"I'll give you five dollars apiece if you will force a quarrel on that young fellow you see outside with the suitcase and umbrella, and then knock the spots out of him," said Thorndike. "He's done me an injury and I want to get square with him in a way he will remember."

"We'll do it, Thorney, and glad to oblige you," said one of the roughs. "Anybody who does you dirt insults us, and we'll wipe the earth with him."

Abandoning their card game, and with the prospect of a five-dollar bill apiece coming their way, the men rose from the table and took a look at the sturdy ex-ballplayer.

In their eyes he did not look very formidable, certainly not against three of them, so without loss of time they proceeded to business.

Sauntering outside they approached Billy.

The boy soon noticed them, and he did not fancy their looks nor their attitude.

They did not allow him any time to figure on the matter.

"Hello, young feller, what brings you down here?" said one of them, roughly.

"I'm looking for a boatman to put me across on the other side," replied Billy.

"Oh, you are eh? What's the matter with you swimmin' across?"

Billy looked the speaker squarely in the eye.

"When I want your advice I'll ask for it," he said, brusquely.

"Oh, you will, you young mackerel! Maybe you'll swim across whether you like to or not," said the tough, snatching the umbrella and suitcase out of the boy's hand when his two companions seized the lad by the arms.

Billy, quick as a flash, shook himself free and backed away a few steps.

"I'd like to know why you loafers are trying to make trouble for me. If you think I'm going to let you rob me with impunity, even if there's three of you, you'll find out you're mistaken," he said, preparing for the scrap he saw ahead.

"Don't take his sass, Sloppy. Shove him off the dock," said the tough who had Billy's umbrella and suitcase.

Sloppy dashed at the boy to carry out the suggestion.

Billy dropped like a shot, and Sloppy tripped over him into the water.

The ex-ball player was accustomed to quick drops and slides on the base lines, and his agility in that respect proved unfortunate for Sloppy.

The rough went under the surface and then came up blowing like a grampus.

The fate which had so quickly and unexpectedly overtaken him rather staggered his companions.

They hadn't looked for such a climax.

Before they were prepared, to make their next move Billy made his.

The exigencies of up-to-date baseball had made a quick thinker of him.

As he went down, in full expectation of throwing Sloppy overboard, he figured out his next move.

He made it as soon as he jumped on his feet.

Just as he had more than once recovered himself on an overthrow to catch him napping at second base and made a dash for third.

In this case he made his dash at the nearest tough.

Before the rascal suspected his purpose, Billy's hard fist landed on his jaw and down he went on the boards of the wharf as flat as a pancake.

Then Billy darted at the other fellow.

The boy's prowess cowed him and he dropped the suitcase and ran.

He forgot to drop the umbrella.

As it was a mighty good one, and Billy didn't care to lose it, the boy grabbed his suitcase and started after him.

Billy soon saw that the tough would get away, for the suitcase embarrassed his speed.

Once more Billy's rapid brain evolved the ruffian's discomfort.

Snapping open the suitcase as he ran, Billy pulled out a baseball which lay on top of his clothes, stopped, dropped the case, and quick as a wink let the ball drive.

The pellet shot on a line straight for the ruffian's head, as if that were a first baseman's mit.

The tough went down kerchunk, stunned and out, while the ball rolled a few feet away.

To recover both his umbrella and the ball was but the work of a moment or two for the agile Billy.

The tough he had knocked down with his fist witnessed the ball-throwing feat and he fairly gasped with astonishment.

So also did George Thorndike from one of the windows of the saloon where he had posted himself to witness the wiping up of the lad he was sore on.

Sloppy also saw it as he pulled himself dripping wet over the top of the stringer at the end of the wharf.

And we may also add that two approaching boatmen also saw the extinguishment of the ruffian who had tried to get away with the umbrella.

Clearly Billy was a boy out of the common.

After having been taken at disadvantage by three husky scoundrels he had, in a very brief space of time, done the trio up in good shape.

And he had also recovered his property, and stood near the saloon waiting to see what Sloppy and the other fellow intended to do next.

As far as appearances went they were not ready to do anything in the aggressive line.

"What's the trouble, young man?" asked one of the boatmen when they came up and looked at the senseless rough stretched out on his face.

Billy explained in a few words.

"Well, you're a corker," said the boatman. "These fellows are tough characters, but I never knew them to attempt a robbery in broad daylight before. We don't often have such business, either by night or day, in this town. I suppose you intend to hand this fellow over to the police?"

"I might if I saw an officer handy, but otherwise I won't bother. He can lie there until his companions take charge of him. You are a boatman, I believe?"

"Yes."

"Will you row me across to the other side?"

"Yes. It will cost you a quarter. It isn't far, but we have to make a living."

"All right. Where's your boat? One of these alongside the wharf?"

"The white one. I'll bring it up to the landing steps and then you can get in."

Giving the toughs no further attention, Billy waited till the boat was at the steps and then he got into it, followed by the boatman, who quickly shoved off.

"You must be a baseball player, young man," said the boatman, as he rowed leisurely off. "Nobody but an expert could throw a ball like you did. I'll wager you raised a lump on that fellow's nut that will give him cause to remember you. Are you a college player?"

"No; I belonged to the Portland team of the New England League up to last Wednesday," replied Billy.

"Were you released?"

"No; I've given up the game to come to Barclay and help my uncle in his business."

"You don't say. Given up the game, eh? Maybe you'll join our local team. We are always glad to get hold of a good player."

"No, I don't think it is at all likely that I'll have anything more to do with baseball."

"Might I ask your name?"

"Billy Bland."

"Is your uncle's name Bland, too?"

"No. Cyrus Leggett is my mother's brother."

"Cyrus Leggett! Why, everybody in Barclay knows him," said the boatman. "So you're his nephew?"

"Yes."

"Cyrus Leggett has been running a general store in this town for the last twenty years or more. His place is on Main street, in the heart of the business district. You're going to his house now, I take it?"

"That's where I'm bound. I thought I'd do that instead of going to the store. My aunt is looking for me to come there when I arrive, for that's the address I got—No. 65 Linden street."

"Well, here you are at the wharf. Linden street is the next one to Gosport, which runs from this landing. Turn to your left. Thank you and good luck to you, young man," said the boatman, as he took the quarter.

Billy started for his uncle's home at a lively gait, feeling decidedly hungry after his long tramp from Eastport.

CHAPTER IV

A SICK BUSINESS

Billy got a royal welcome from his aunt Cynthia, when she opened the door in response to his knock and found him outside.

"For the land's sake, Billy!" she exclaimed. "Why didn't you come by the noon train? Cyrus and me looked for you, and we kept dinner waitin' half an hour."

"I did come by the noon train, but I got off at Eastport by mistake, and had to walk over from there. That's why I didn't show up when you expected me."

"Walked from Eastport! Do tell! Why that's all of eight or nine mile," exclaimed his aunt in astonishment.

"I came most of the way by the beach route, which is shorter by a third. I'd have come all the way by the shore only the tide cut me off at one of the big cliffs about a mile from here. I had to climb up the rocks and finish by the cliff road. It was a mighty good thing for a very nice young lady that I came that way."

"I want to know! Tell me about it, Billy," said his aunt, who had all the curiosity of her sex to learn everything that was going on.

"I will, but couldn't you give me a glass of milk and a slice of pie to stay my stomach? I'm as hungry as a hunter."

"Why, that would spile your appetite for supper. It will be ready in an hour or so."

"An hour or so! I'll be famished by that time."

"Well, I'll give you some cookies and a glass of milk if you've got to have it."

"I'll make that do," said Billy.

As soon as the cookies and the milk were before him he began the story of his adventure on the cliff.

The cookies and the milk were finished long before his story, which he supplemented with the encounter he had had with the toughs on the wharf.

His aunt was astonished at the account of Miss Carter's narrow escape.

"Why, Miss Carter is the darter of Nelson Carter, head of the dry goods store of Carter & Thorndike, on Main street, about a block from Cyrus's place. The Carters, and the Thorndikes, and the Peabodys, and the Peaseleys, and sich, are the real upper class in town. And you saved the life of Miss Carter!" said the aunt, raising both of her hands. "Well, well; who'd have thought you'd 'a' done such a thing as that! Why, your name is bound to be in the paper, sure's the world."

"I guess not. Young Thorndike being the son of Mr. Carter's partner, the affair is sure to be hushed up, so you mustn't say a word about it," said Billy.

"And you actually walked home with Miss Carter and was introduced to Mis' Carter. Well, well, who'd have thought it?"

Billy grinned at the importance his aunt attached to what he considered a mere act of courtesy to the young lady.

It was at this point he brought in his adventure on the wharf.

"For the land's sake!" cried his aunt, with a look of consternation. "You were attacked by three men. How did you escape?"

He told her.

She fairly gasped with astonishment.

"And you done all that yourself?" she said.

Billy assured her that nobody had helped him out.

"Well, well; wonders will never cease. What a boy you are, Billy!"

In due time Mrs. Leggett got the supper cooked, to which she added extras in honor of her nephew's arrival, and then Cyrus Leggett made his appearance from the store.

He welcomed Billy in a hearty fashion, and told him he was real glad to see him.

Of course, Billy had to go over his day's adventures again, and his uncle was just as much astonished as his aunt had been.

He declared that in saving the life of Miss Carter, Billy had done a big thing for himself, for Mr. Carter would be sure to show his appreciation of his services in some substantial way.

"I'm not looking for any favors from him, Uncle Cyrus," replied Billy. "I shall be perfectly satisfied if I am received at their home as a visitor."

"I'm afraid you ain't got money enough, Billy, to associate with the big bugs," said his uncle.

"Oh, I don't expect to associate with anybody in that set but Miss Carter. I like her a whole lot. She's the prettiest girl I've ever met."

His uncle grinned.

"You don't want to get sweet on her, Billy, for it won't

do you no good. She's too high up for you to fly your kite."

Billy flushed up and said he wasn't thinking a whole lot about girls anyway.

After supper Cyrus Leggett took Billy around to the store, which kept open of evenings.

What Mr. Leggett didn't keep at his establishment for sale was hardly worth mentioning.

He advertised that he sold everything from a needle to an anchor, and Billy was willing to believe he did, for needles in every variety could be bought at the notion counter, while outside, on either side of the main entrance, a couple of anchors suitable for a large schooner, with piles of different-sized iron chains, were on exhibition, with price attached.

Mr. Leggett had started in business something over twenty years since, before Barclay had expanded to its present size, and the methods with which he started he had clung to, although they had gradually become antiquated.

His trade dwindled by degrees in consequence, and would have vanished altogether before the more progressive tactics of his business rivals, but for the fact that many of his old customers stuck to him because they sympathized with his old-fashioned methods, inasmuch as they were old-fashioned themselves, and were prejudiced against everything that savored of up-to-dateness.

Mr. Leggett had made money, and having saved it carefully, he could afford to continue his store at what was practically a loss, although he figured out a small profit at the end of the year.

He was getting old anyway, and did not expect to linger many years longer in this world, although he looked good to last another twenty years at least.

People down East don't seem to die with the same celerity that they hop off elsewhere, probably because they take life easier.

At any rate, Mr. Leggett never worried over anything.

He had seen customer after customer fade from his books and knew they went elsewhere to trade, but the loss didn't make him turn a hair.

He took the matter very philosophically.

If a customer preferred to deal somewhere else that was his privilege, and Mr. Leggett never went out of his way to argue the matter with him.

He could stand it, and things went right along on the same old plan.

To Billy's eyes the store looked very countrified.

It lacked life and energy, and, therefore, was the very opposite of Billy himself.

One clerk was enough to handle all the business done during evenings, except on Saturdays; while two, with Mr. Leggett's occasional help, sufficed to fill the bill in the daytime.

One of the two had given notice that he was going to transfer his talents to another town, and that is why Mr. Leggett had made his nephew an offer of a half interest in his business if he came to Barclay at once and learned how to run a general store.

Mr. Leggett showed him all over the establishment that evening, explaining things in a general way.

The cellar was crowded with hardware, agricultural im-

plements of a small and miscellaneous character, a considerable portion of which were out of date, and divers other stuff, more or less covered with dust.

By the time Billy had seen all that his eyes were able to grasp he had reached the conclusion that the store was a back number, like its owner.

When he retired to bed that night it was with a sense of depression that he was about to begin his business career in a store that seemed so far behind the times.

The only consolation he had was the intimation his uncle had given him that as soon as he had learned the ropes he intended turning the management over to him.

"I'll bet I'll make a change or two when the store comes into my charge," he said to himself. "As little as I know about business at this moment, I can see where it will stand improvement, and I wouldn't be surprised that by the time I have become familiar with the place, and the secrets of the trade that I'll find a good many more changes are necessary."

Thus thought the wideawake boy before he was aware how badly his uncle's store had been run in the ground.

From the fact that Mr. Leggett had been so long established, and because the store was on the main business street, Billy supposed that his uncle was doing as well as any one in his line, in spite of its antediluvian aspect.

Being a boy of up-to-the-minute ideas, he hated to associate himself with anything that had a Noah's Ark appearance unless he could see his way to cleaning out the cobwebs and brightening up things generally.

It would take tact to bring his uncle around to his views, but he intended to do it or take another whack at organized baseball.

With such thoughts uppermost in his mind Billy turned in to pass his first night in Barclay.

CHAPTER V

BILLY'S FIRST DAY AT THE STORE

There was nothing slow about Barclay, unless it was Mr. Leggett's general store, and perhaps a few other relics that were gradually losing themselves in the shuffle.

The town boasted two morning dailies, both of which had been started since Billy's uncle became identified with Main street.

One of these papers was delivered at Mr. Leggett's house, while the other was left at the store.

When Billy came down to breakfast next morning his uncle was reading the Times between bites.

Suddenly he stopped eating, and seemed greatly interested in something that had caught his eye.

"Billy," he said, a moment later, with a chuckle, "you have got your name in the newspaper, and I reckon that half the folks in town will be talkin' about you afore noon."

"Is that so, sir?" exclaimed the boy. "You don't mean to say that affair on the cliff is published, do you?"

"Well, no, not exactly; it's the t'other adventure you had—the one on the wharf. Here, read it for yourself," and he passed the paper over with his thumb on the lengthy paragraph which concerned his nephew.

Billy read the story with some interest.

It was headed—"A triple play. How a clever young ball player made his debut in town. Puts three loafers out of business on Smith's Wharf."

Then followed the facts as Billy remembered giving them to the boatman.

It was evident that the man had seen a reporter and put him wise to the incident, enlarging on the young stranger's ability as a ball tosser.

Billy's name was printed as William Bland, and the fact was stated that he was a nephew of "Cyrus Leggett, one of our oldest and most esteemed citizens, and proprietor of Leggett's general store, No. 56 Main street."

It was clear that the editor of the paper had verified Billy's connection with the Portland Club, of the New England League, and obtained some facts concerning the lad's standing on the team he had deserted.

These facts, highly eulogistic of Billy's performance on the diamond, both at the bat and in short field, were duly published, with the idea of impressing the Barclay public with a sense of the importance of the newcomer to town.

Had the incident on the cliff come to the knowledge of the editor there is no doubt that the story would have occupied a whole column, with a formidable scare heading, and Billy would have been called a hero of the first water.

"The newspapers of this town seem to get the news," said Billy, as he returned the paper to his uncle. "The boatman who rowed me across the harbor is the party who turned that story in. Probably he got a couple of dollars for it. If he didn't blow the money over some bar I have no fault to find with him. I didn't expect to get into the limelight so soon after my arrival in this burgh, but it was through no fault of mine that such is the case."

Mrs. Leggett was curious to learn what the newspaper printed about Billy, and her husband read the story for her benefit.

"Well, well," she exclaimed; "I remember your ma writ me that you was playin' ball; but, land's sake, I didn't calculate you was doin' it for a business. Be there any money in it?"

"Yes, if you are fast enough to get on one of the big teams," replied Billy.

"You mean you have to run fast?" said his aunt, whose knowledge of baseball was confined to fleeting glimpses she had caught of boys playing the game on a town lot.

"Well, yes, that's one of the requirements of the game. You've got to be quicker than greased lightning with your head, hands and feet to hold your end up these days. And on top of that you've got to have a good batting eye."

"Do tell. And what is a battin' eye?" asked the puzzled lady.

Billy explained the meaning of it, but his aunt didn't quite comprehend him.

By that time breakfast was over and Mr. Leggett told his nephew it was time they started for the store.

"I shall want you to take the key and open up to-morrow mornin'," said his uncle. "The boy who has been doin' it has been took down with the measles, so you'll have to sweep and tidy things up a bit mornin's till he gets back."

"All right," replied Billy, who had no objection to commencing at the foot of the ladder, though he didn't mean

to remain on the lowest rung any longer than it would take him to mount to the next one.

Billy spent most of the day in posting himself about the merchandise the store contained and the prices at which it was sold.

Occasionally he waited on a customer when there happened to be more in the place than the two clerks could attend to handily, which was not often.

"This must be an off day in trade," said Billy about three o'clock, to the senior clerk, the one who was going to leave.

"Why do you think that?" asked the clerk.

"Because I haven't noticed any alarming rush on the part of the people of this town to buy things to-day," he replied.

"We never have any rush here. We have made about the average number of sales to-day. Trade isn't what it used to be with us. New stores have cut in on our business, and that has hurt us. Mr. Leggett hasn't half the customers he had when I first came here."

"Is that so?" replied Billy. "As this is an old established house, I should think it would have held its own against new stores, as the town has grown steadily during the last ten or fifteen years, and that means more buyers. Probably the trouble is that my uncle keeps too many things on sale—like a country general store, which, I imagine, is out of place in a big town like this, and particularly on the chief business street."

"That has long been my opinion," nodded the clerk, looking around to see if the proprietor was within earshot. "He combines too many kinds of business here, and, as a result, he can't cover any of them well enough to fill the bill. For instance, we sell dry goods. What does our stock amount to alongside even Stack & Merrill, up the block, which is a small establishment beside Carter, Thorndike & Co. on the corner? Those houses and two or three others do all the business in dry goods and we do nothing to speak of."

"Then why doesn't Mr. Leggett cut out dry goods, or cut out two or three other things and make more of a specialty of dry goods?" said Billy.

"Because he's set in his ways. He won't run the store on any different lines than he's always run it."

"But he can't fail to see that he's losing money by holding to bygone ideas."

"That doesn't seem to make any difference with him."

"Oh, shucks! That's no way to do. Conditions are changing right along nowadays, and people in business have got to adapt themselves to the new conditions or they'll soon be put on the shelf. Why, you've only got to look at the difference between baseball to-day and what it was twenty years ago, when Mr. Leggett started this store, to understand how things are changing, and for the better, too."

"That's right," nodded the clerk.

"I'll have to have a heart-to-heart talk with my uncle and see if I can't make him see matters in the right light."

"I'm afraid you will only waste your breath."

"Well, we'll see. I won't make a move until I make myself thoroughly acquainted with the store and the town itself. When I am able to put up a convincing argument I'll tackle Mr. Leggett, and if he won't listen to reason,

I'll pack my suitcase and decamp. Probably I'll go back to Portland, where my mother lives, and take up with the game again. Baseball is a sort of second nature with me—seems to be grafted in my bones. When I pulled out to come here, the manager of the Portland team put up an awful holler. He said I was a natural player, and was doing a foolish thing to cut the game when everything pointed to my becoming a star; but what he said made no difference to me, when I saw what I considered a better and more permanent thing in sight. A baseball career is limited—ten years would probably see my finish to all intents and purposes, if I wasn't done up by a serious accident in the meanwhile, and then around thirty I'd have to begin all over again. That wouldn't suit me. I believe in beginning my lifework now, and that's why I'm here, ready to hustle for all I'm worth to establish myself in something solid. My uncle intends me to succeed him. I'm to have a half interest in the business to interest me, and the whole business eventually, if I outlive the Leggetts. But I'm not going to spend my best years in a sleepy business even to become owner of it. If this store isn't running to good advantage, as I suspect, I'm going to liven it up and cut away the dead wood, or I'm going to quit."

Billy spoke in a dead earnest tone that showed he meant business, and the clerk regarded him with new interest and respect.

"You're the person who is wanted here, Bland," he said. "With your uncle's reputation at your back, and new blood injected according to sound judgment, this store should take on a boom once more."

At that moment a sprucely-dressed young man entered the store.

"What can I do for you?" asked the clerk, stepping forward.

"Can you tell me where I will be able to find William Bland?" he asked.

The visitor was a stranger to Billy, and the boy, as he advanced, wondered why he wished to see him.

"Are you William Bland?" asked the young man.

"Yes, that's my name," replied Billy.

"My name is Manson. I am the manager of the Barclay Baseball Club. I see by the papers that you belong to the Portland team of the New England League."

"I did belong to it till last Wednesday; but I am out of organized baseball now for good."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Manson, in some surprise.

"Yes, sir. I have gone into business here with my uncle."

"Then you got your release from the Portland people?"

"No; the manager wouldn't release me. He wishes to keep a string on me, but I told him it wouldn't do any good as I had played my last game."

"Then you intend to remain here permanently?"

"Such is my present intention."

"Perhaps I could induce you to play on our local team occasionally. I should be glad to enlist your services."

"No, sir. I propose to devote all my energies to this business."

"Our team is not a professional one. Surely you could devote an occasional Saturday afternoon to a little exercise. All work and no play, you know the rest," smiled Manson.

"I might come out to your grounds and see your team

play some time, but as for taking part in a game, you'll have to excuse me."

"Well," replied Manson, looking disappointed, "if that is your decision I must accept it, of course. Come out on Saturday, if you can. Our grounds are near the station. Here is my card. Ask for me and I will provide you with a good seat. I am glad to have met you, and will be pleased to see you again. Good day."

"Good day, Mr. Manson," said Billy, returning to his work of learning the prices in the notion department.

Mr. Manson hadn't been gone many minutes before a well dressed, fine looking gentleman entered the store and asked for Billy.

The boy was again told that a visitor wished to see him.

"It's Mr. Carter, of Carter, Thorndike & Co.," said the clerk, who was decidedly surprised that that gentleman should enter the store, something he had never done before, and very curious to know what business the big dry goods man could have with Mr. Leggett's nephew.

The affair on the cliff had been kept quiet, as Billy judged it would be, and thus nobody outside of those immediately interested, and Mr. and Mrs. Leggett, were aware that a tragedy had nearly happened close to the big boulder on the afternoon of Billy's arrival in town.

"You are William Bland, I believe," said Mr. Carter, as the boy came up to him.

"Yes, sir. You are Mr. Carter, the dry goods merchant," replied Billy.

"That is my name. I want to take you by the hand and express to you the deep sense of gratitude I feel toward you for the signal service you rendered my daughter yesterday afternoon," said the gentleman.

"That is all right, Mr. Carter," replied the boy. "I only did what any one would have done under the circumstances."

"The fact that you were the one to save my dear child from perhaps a terrible death places us all under the deepest obligation. I thank you from my heart, and I trust that if I can ever do you a favor, you will not fail to call upon me."

"Thank you, Mr. Carter, but I hope it will not be necessary for me to call on you with that object in view."

"You are Mr. Leggett's nephew, I understand, and I think you told my daughter that you were going to remain here permanently, as your uncle had offered you an interest in his business."

"Unless circumstances cause me to change my mind I shall remain here with Mr. Leggett."

After some further talk Mr. Carter took his leave, but not without extending an invitation for Billy to call at his home when he could find the time to do so.

CHAPTER VI

BILLY TRIES HIS HAND AT COLLECTIONS

Two weeks passed away and Billy had, by strict attention and the use of his eyes, got pretty well acquainted with his uncle's business.

The more he learned about it the more dissatisfied he grew with Mr. Leggett's methods.

They were the worst ever, in his estimation, and the wonder was that he kept going at all in the face of modern competition.

On Monday afternoon of Billy's third week Mr. Leggett came into the store looking somewhat out of humor.

He didn't look well either, for he had contracted a cold and it appeared to resist the old-fashioned remedies his wife had always found serviceable heretofore.

"You look ill, Uncle Cyrus," said Billy. "You'd better go home."

"Go home, and me with bills to collect," snapped Mr. Leggett.

"I'll look after your bills. Give me a list of the debtors you want to collect from, and I'll call on them."

"You wouldn't get nothin'," said his relative.

"Why wouldn't I? If their bills are due or past due I guess I could get the money from most of them," said Billy, confidently.

"If I can't get them to pay up how could you?"

"Oh, you are referring to those customers who are extra slow pay, eh? Just give me a chance at them and I'll stir them up."

"All my customers almost are slow pay. They never seem to have no money any more. I ain't gettin' enough in to meet my current bills, and goodness knows business ain't flourishin' nowhow. My cash sales are gettin' wuss every month," growled Mr. Leggett, gloomily.

Billy looked at his uncle and scratched his ear.

"Is there a good deal owing to you?" he asked.

"Is there? I should say so. Here's a man who owes me \$350," and the storekeeper exhibited a long statement of account. "I've just come from his office. I thought he'd pay something on account because he was in here this mornin' and had \$15 more stuff charged on the books."

"In addition to the \$350?"

"Yes; in addition to the \$350."

"Did you let him have the goods?"

"Of course I let him have 'em. How could I help it? When a man owes you a big account like that you can't afford to get him down on you."

"But he may never pay you anything. He may be just trying to see how much he can get out of you, and when he finally hits the limit he may drop you like a hot potato."

"No; he's good for the money, and I'll get it when he gets good and ready to pay me. Perhaps if he knew I really needed the money he'd pay up; but you see he's one of my oldest customers, who's always stuck to me, and I can't talk to him as I would like to."

"How long has that bill been running?"

"About eighteen months. You kin see the date on the head of it."

"Well, what other big bills have you?"

"Oh, a hull stack on 'em. Come into the office and I'll show you the statements."

Billy went in with him.

Mr. Leggett took out of the safe a bunch of statements that would almost have papered one side of the room.

He went over them with his nephew, stating which were gilt edge in the long run, which were pretty safe, which were fairly good, and finally those that looked to be hopeless and those that he reckoned actually so.

Billy made a private mark on each which he would recognize again as they proceeded, and when his uncle started to return them to his safe the boy persuaded him to let him make an attempt to collect them.

"You want to be keerful, nephew, with the good ones, for I can't afford to queer myself with my customers. I ain't got so many now that I kin afford to lose many more on 'em," said Mr. Leggett, earnestly.

"Don't worry, uncle; I'll handle them with gloves," said Billy.

"See that you do. If you sp'ile this business, what's left of it, there won't be nothin' for Cynthia and you when I'm gone."

"I won't hurt the business, Uncle Cyrus. Now that I've got a good line on it I see where it can be improved and made to pay better. I want to talk with you about it."

"Well, I don't feel well enough to talk with you about business matters to-day. If you know how you kin boost sales, and kin show me that your methods are sensible, I'll consider 'em. But I never do nothin' in a hurry. I never found it paid to go off half cocked. Be sure you're right, than go ahead, was old Davy Crockett's motter, and it's good enough for me to foller."

"That's right, uncle, but as soon as you know you're right you don't want to go to sleep over it. You want to get right down to business, and make things hum."

The old man looked doubtfully at his nephew.

The idea of doing anything on the rush was contrary to his business methods.

He never took a step without mature deliberation.

The time he lost in figuring up the pros and cons of a proposition cost him many a good chance to make a round sum of money.

Somebody else who thought of the same idea later stepped in and did him out of the opportunity.

By the time he got through talking with Billy, Mr. Leggett didn't feel that he could do any more collecting that day.

He felt kind of bad, and, instructing his nephew to look after things generally, he went home.

That night he was taken down with pneumonia and for ten days his fate hung in the balance, then the crisis passed, and he began to mend.

In the meantime Billy started in to collect his uncle's accounts.

The total sum due rather staggered him, but as the bulk were either good or promising, he tackled the job with confidence.

He decided not to make a personal call on any that appeared to be collectible.

He wrote each debtor a personal letter, signing Mr. Leggett's name to it.

He didn't say a word about needing the money, or hint that he was afraid to trust the customer longer.

No, the whole trouble, he said, was owing to a sudden call made upon him by a big dealer, who had himself been forced into a financial corner and needed the cash.

The amount of the debtor's bill (if it was a large one) he said, would tide the case over nicely, and he hoped that Mr. ——— would find it convenient to ante up.

Billy was a high school graduate, and he had the knack of penning a very smooth and right-to-the-point letter.

The letters were mailed all together, and inside of a day or two, while his uncle was very sick indeed, and the doctor looked very solemn every time he called, results began to show themselves.

The first person to respond was Mr. Jones, the man who owed the \$350 outside the current month's purchases.

He sent his check in full, and Billy mailed him his receipted statement, with a feeling of great satisfaction.

"Uncle Cyrus wouldn't have got that inside of six months more with his method. I've collected it right off the reel, without giving the least offence. The whole thing is the trick of knowing how to approach a man," said the boy to himself.

Apparently he was right, for the money kept coming in either by mail or Mr. Leggett was requested to send for it.

Quite a number, however, failed to take any notice of Billy's letter, and at the end of a week Billy wrote the delinquents a second letter, just as nice and smooth as the first, and told them all over again about the bill he had to meet.

He added that he knew money was tight, but he was compelled to ask the debtor to help him out.

This letter evidently stirred up a number of the slow payers, for another inflow of cash followed.

By this time Billy had collected \$1,500, and Mr. Leggett had passed the critical stage of his illness.

A third letter brought in \$500 more.

During this time Billy made personal calls on those who Mr. Leggett never expected to pay up.

They had ceased to be customers.

Billy investigated every one of them beforehand, and knew how to handle them.

Two or three paid something on account—they were responsible, and Billy talked them out of the money.

None of the others would come up, or say they intended to settle.

The boy then went to a smart young lawyer, a college graduate and ex-ball player, and after a short talk, directed him to make a demand on each for the money, in default of payment, or a satisfactory compromise, he was to proceed to sue those who Billy found the sheriff could levy on.

By this means Billy got hold of another \$100, several promises to pay, and had several suits under way.

Altogether Billy had added \$2,350 to his uncle's bank account, and Mr. Leggett was unaware of the fact.

A week later Billy showed the results of his collecting efforts to his uncle, now convalescent, and that worthy was undisguisedly astonished.

"You're a wonder, Billy," he said, in a weak whisper. "How did you do it?"

His nephew told him, and the old man was lost in admiration.

"You kin run the business as good as me," he said, a wonderful admission on his part, but nevertheless Billy thought he could run it better.

CHAPTER VII

WAYLaid AT NIGHT

Billy had not yet ventured to call on Msis Nellie Carter, though that young lady looked for him to do so.

One reason was that he couldn't leave the store evenings while his uncle was so ill, and on Sundays his aunt wanted him around the house.

Now that Mr. Leggett was on the road to recovery, though at a very slow rate, he began to consider the question of paying a visit to the Carter home.

He decided that it was the proper thing to notify Miss Nellie in advance that he was coming, so that she would be prepared to receive him.

Accordingly he wrote her a note one morning and stepped up to the corner to place it in a mail box.

To his surprise, as well as pleasure, he came face to face with the young lady herself as she was coming out of her father's store.

"Why, Mr. Bland, this is indeed a pleasant surprise," exclaimed Nellie Carter, extending her daintily gloved hand with a smile.

"Thank you, Miss Carter, the pleasure is mutual," said Billy, lifting his hat with one hand and taking hers with the other.

"I've been expecting to receive a visit from you," she said. "It is several weeks since we became acquainted under what the papers might call strenuous circumstances, and I think it is about time you honored us with a call."

Billy explained why he had been unable to avail himself of the kind invitation he had received from her and her parents, and concluded by telling her that he had made up his mind to call on the following evening.

He produced the letter he was about to mail and handed it to her.

"There is the evidence of my intention. If you have no other engagement, you may look for me," he said.

"I have no other engagement, and will expect you," she said.

They talked a few minutes longer together and then parted.

George Thorndike stood on the other side of the street, a witness of their interview, and he ground his teeth savagely together.

He had lost track of Billy after the discomfiture of his three myrmidons on the wharf that afternoon, though he had walked around town on the lookout for him.

Now that he had spotted the boy again, he determined to follow him till he discovered where he hung out.

He shadowed Billy to Mr. Leggett's store, and finding that he did not come out within a reasonable time, he looked in and soon made out that the boy he hated was connected with the establishment.

"So this is where he works?" he thought. "I must send Sloppy here to keep tab on him, and find out where he lives. Then I'll see what new scheme I can hatch up to get square with him."

With this purpose in view, Thorndike started for the saloon at the head of Smith's wharf to put the tough on the job.

That evening when Thorndike appeared at the saloon, Sloppy reported to him that Billy Bland lived with his uncle at No. 65 Linden street, not far from the harbor.

"Don't you want to get square with him for dumping you into the water?" said Thorndike.

"Do I?" said Sloppy. "You can bet I do, and so does Doyle, who ain't forgotten the crack on the nut he got from

the ball that chap fired at him. Now that we know where to find him we're goin' to get hunk, bet your boots."

"And I'll help you, for I'm interested in having him done up," said Thorndike.

"All right, governor; we'll figure out how we're to catch him, and what we'll do to him as soon as we get hold of him. I reckon he needs a good dressin' down, and we are the chaps to hand it to him."

When Billy went to supper on the following evening he arranged with the clerk to look after the store and close up at nine o'clock as usual.

Mr. Leggett's store was the only important place on Main street that remained open after eight o'clock, and he caught many a chance customer during that extra hour.

Carter, Thorndike & Co., and some of the larger establishments, always closed at six o'clock, except on Saturday night.

Billy put on a few extra frills after supper and started out to call on the Carters.

As he left the house he noticed a couple of men lounging on the other side of the street, but paid no attention to them.

When he turned into the street leading in the direction of the center of the town the two men followed after him.

They kept on behind him in a way that would not attract his attention.

If they had any designs on him they did not dare show them at that early hour, for none of the blocks were wholly without one or more pedestrians, and the nearer they drew to the business part the more people they met.

Crossing Main street, Billy went straight on, following the semi-circular trend of the town, from one street to another, till he drew near the more exclusive residential section.

Mr. Carter's home was No. 21 Prospect avenue, and before Billy got to it he passed the residence of George Thorndike's father.

Thorndike and a friend of his own age were coming out at the gate.

Billy recognized him and he recognized Billy.

The former had a suspicion of where Billy was bound, and was going to follow him to make sure, when he saw Sloppy and Doyle coming along.

With a grin of satisfaction he changed his purpose, and walked away with his friend, for it wasn't politic for him to hold any communication with his tough acquaintances in the presence of his companion.

He was satisfied that Sloppy and his pal were on Billy's trail for the purpose of doing him up if they got the chance, and he guessed they'd find the chance.

Billy entered the Carter grounds, went to the front door and rang the bell.

A natty looking maid answered his ring, and when he asked for Miss Carter he was shown into the reception-room on the ground floor.

Here he was presently joined by Mr. Carter, who had heard from his daughter that the boy was coming.

Then Mrs. Carter appeared and welcomed him cordially, and lastly, Nellie came in, looking prettier than ever in a summer evening gown that fitted her finely.

In a little while Nellie's parents withdrew and left the young people together.

Both Billy and the girl, being lively of disposition, got on swimmingly together, and enjoyed every minute of the evening until ten o'clock struck, and the boy said he guessed it was time for him to go.

Nellie did not try to detain him, but she gave him a warm invitation to repeat his visit soon again.

It was finally decided between them that he was to call again two weeks from that evening, then Billy left.

On the other side of the street, leaning against a shade tree, Sloppy and Doyle stood waiting for him to make his appearance.

The street was deserted at that time of the night, and everything looked favorable to them.

"Here he comes," said Sloppy.

The two rascals grasped their short clubs tighter and started to walk in the direction they expected the boy would take.

Billy made his exit from the grounds, feeling as gay as a lark, for Nellie had been exceedingly nice to him that evening, and showed a decided liking for his society, while her parents had treated him with the greatest consideration.

The boy was already more than half in love with the charming miss, and the fact that she was so greatly his social superior did not seem to worry him in the least.

He noticed the two men walking on the other side of the way.

Somehow it struck him that they were the same two he had seen in front of his uncle's house on Linden street.

They reached the corner a little ahead of him and stood there, expecting he would cross.

He did, but at an angle, aiming for the other corner.

They started on again to cut him off.

Their actions looked suspicious to him, and when they were half way over he thought he would test the matter by suddenly altering his course and making for the corner they had vacated.

The moment he did so they stopped and turned back.

Then Billy stopped, satisfied that they had some bad object in view.

They stopped and consulted a moment.

Then they made a sudden dash at him, waving their cudgels in the air.

CHAPTER VIII

BILLY HAS HIS OWN IDEAS ABOUT ADVERTISING

"My gracious!" exclaimed Billy, "this seems to be a hold up."

He was without means of defending himself, and two husky looking ruffians with sticks in their hands looked a formidable proposition to face.

Billy didn't care to face such odds, so he took to his heels back down Prospect Avenue.

As he was fleet of foot he gradually widened the distance between himself and the enemy, until it was evident to them that they couldn't catch him in a race.

He turned up a cross street and ran smack into a boy of his own age.

Both went down on the walk, Billy on top.

The other lad set up a big kick, as they picked themselves up.

"I beg your pardon," began Billy. Then he recognized the other as Thorndike. "So it's you?" he said.

Thorndike then saw who it was, and he was furious.

Around the corner dashed Sloppy and Doyle.

Billy saw them coming, and calculating that he had no time to lose, he shouted a warning to his enemy to run, and took to his own heels.

Had he dreamed that Thorndike was in cahoots with the two ruffians he would have been greatly surprised.

Not hearing further pursuit, he eased up and looked around.

The two rascals, perceiving the futility of continuing the chase, had stopped to explain their failure to Thorndike.

Billy, thinking they had nabbed the lad, and were robbing him, stopped and turned back, picking up a stout stick he saw in the roadway.

Although he had no respect or friendship for Thorndike, he didn't feel that he could desert him in an emergency, notwithstanding the odds he would have to face.

The trio saw Billy coming back, and were greatly surprised thereat.

They could not understand why, after making his escape, he should have the nerve to venture back.

The ruffians broke away from Thorndike and stood awaiting Billy's approach.

Billy was surprised in his turn that Thorndike did not make a break to get away as soon as he had apparently been released.

The store boy slowed down and finally stopped.

"Why don't you run?" he shouted to Thorndike.

Billy's words gave that lad an idea of why the boy he hated had started back.

It occurred to him that a little bit of treachery on his part would trap the store boy.

He said something to the men in a low tone and then started toward Billy.

They made no attempt to follow.

"What did those chaps do to you?" Billy asked Thorndike, as he came up.

"They were going to do me up, but you stopped them by coming back," he replied.

"Well, you can avoid them by going around the block."

As he started to hurry on his way, Thorndike suddenly threw his arms around him and gave a shout.

Sloppy and Doyle immediately started toward them on the run.

"What's the matter with you? Let go of me!" cried Billy, struggling to free himself, but Thorndike clung on to him.

Then Billy realized that Thorndike wanted the men to catch him.

Such a piece of ingratitude made him fighting mad in a moment.

Once the third baseman of an opposing nine had tackled him that way and tried to prevent him scoring from second on a long hit to the outfield.

Billy wriggled out of his arms and punched him in the jaw.

That's the way he handled Thorndike on this occasion.

He got free not a moment too soon.

As Thorndike reeled back against Sloppy, Billy dodged Doyle's swipe of the club, and whirling quickly around tapped the ruffian on the head with his own stick.

The rascal uttered a fierce imprecation, and before he could recover, Billy started for the corner, like a runner trying to steal second.

The enemy did not follow, and so the plucky boy made his way home without further adventure.

Billy had been considering how he could entice a flow of trade to his uncle's store.

"We have a lot of stuff here that the people of this town want, but they either don't know that we've got it, or they go to some other store that deals specially in that line of goods," he thought. "The principle on which Mr. Leggett runs this store is out of place on the main street of such a big town. What we want is to specialize on a few articles. I doubt, though, if I can get my uncle to agree to do that. He couldn't do it without sending about half his old stock to auction so as to make room for more salable goods. I wish I had charge of this establishment for about six months, without fear of interference, I'll bet Mr. Leggett wouldn't know it."

Billy looked certain parts of the stock over at his leisure and mentally determined what he would get rid of for good if he was boss.

"Say, Uncle Cyrus, you're satisfied with the way I've been running things since you've been sick, aren't you?" he said at supper that evening.

His uncle was out of bed, but in no shape to return to the store.

In fact, unknown to Billy, the doctor had strongly advised him to go to the Berkshire Hills for a month to recuperate, and as his wife seconded the suggestion, he was considering it, though rather unwillingly.

"Yes, Billy, you're doin' first-class. Considerin' the little business experience you've had I don't know how you manage so well," replied Mr. Leggett.

"Oh, I've got a business head. If you were to give me full swing for a few weeks I'd make a new store out of it," said the boy.

The old man shook his head, incredulously.

"You're young and smart, but you lack the real knack that comes only with long experience," he said. "I reckon you think you could do wonders, but you'd soon find you had bit off more'n you could chew."

"Uncle, you've got a small standing advertisement in the Argus."

Mr. Leggett nodded.

"Do you ever advertise in the Times?"

"No. Their rates are too stiff."

"Probably the circulation warrants the charge. I don't think a whole lot of the Argus as a medium."

"It's the oldest paper in town, and I've always advertised in it. The Times ain't been runnin' more'n three years."

"But I'll bet three or four people read the Times where one takes the Argus."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because it's a live newspaper. It prints twice as much news as the Argus. I'd like you to give me permission to put a six-inch advertisement, double column, in the Times to-morrow as a starter."

"Six inches, double column!" exclaimed the storekeeper, paralyzed at such a piece of extravagance, in a paper whose rates were high in Mr. Leggett's estimation, though not in the opinion of up-to-date advertisers. "What in creation do you want to advertise in that space. Why, I never run more'n two inches, single column, in the Argus."

"And whoever reads that advertisement of yours? Not two people a week, though it appears every day. The money is simply wasted. I understand that the same advertisement has been running for years, something after this fashion—'Leggett's General Store. A fully supply of dry good, hardware, house-furnishing goods, groceries, notions, farming implements,' etc., etc., with your address. What good is it? No good, in my opinion. Let me show you how to advertise. If I don't draw trade I'll pay you the price of the advertisement."

"What's them six inches cost once?" asked Mr. Leggett, cautiously.

"Ten or twelve dollars."

The storekeeper nearly had a fit.

"Why, you're crazy, nephew. You'd ruin me in no time," he ejaculated.

"I haven't done you any harm so far."

"That's because I ain't let you done nothin' preposterous. You ain't tried none of them new-fangled notions you've got in your head."

"I've tried one," replied Billy, with a smile.

"You hev? What was it?" asked his uncle, anxiously.

"I adopted a brand-new style of making collections, and I padded up your bank account considerably."

"I'll allow that was all right. There wasn't nothin' revolutionary in that. You're a scholar, which I ain't, and I guess you could do what I couldn't. I ain't got no fault to find with that. You collected four times as much in a month as I ever did, and none of my customers owe me big amounts now. Yes, you done that all right."

"Then let me advertise the way I want and maybe you'll find me right there, too? What's ten or twelve dollars if it will draw trade?"

"Do you really think it's worth it?" said Mr. Leggett, doubtfully.

"I do."

"What kind of advertisement are you going to put in?"

"You'll see it in the morning."

"Well, I'll let you do it once, but I ain't got great faith in it."

So the matter was closed, and when Billy went back to the store he carried the advertisement to the Times he had already written out, and its single insertion cost \$10.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ADVERTISEMENT THAT PULLED THE CUSTOM

Next morning the following advertisement appeared in the Times, next to the local news column:

EGG-CLOCKS!!!

Everybody knows the difficulty of cooking soft-boiled eggs just right. There is only one right way. The water

must be boiling when you put the egg in, and it should remain just three minutes and a half—no more, no less. You all know that, of course, but the great difficulty is to get the exact time. You say the clock will tell you, but does it? Can you boil an egg three minutes and a half by clock, every time? You've tried it and you know you can't do it to save your life. You can't hit it exactly. To-day and during the rest of the week we will place on sale a tiny sand-glass that will empty its sand from one glass to the other in exactly three minutes and a half. It is old, you say, but **CAN YOU BEAT IT?** The regular price of these glasses are ten cents each in every store dealing in them. **OUR PRICE**, as long as the supply lasts, is **THREE CENTS**. Don't fail to get one **NOW**.

CYRUS LEGGETT, 56 Main Street.

The word "egg-clocks" was printed in bold, black type, and the rest of the advertisement in the ordinary reading type of the paper, single leaded.

Leggett's name and address was not extra prominent, for Leggett's store was known to most everybody, even if they didn't trade there, and a wide band of white space surrounded the print.

Mr. Leggett saw the advertisement shortly after Billy went to the store, and when he had fully grasped the evidence of his eyesight he almost had a fit.

"Cynthia, come here!" he cried, in weak, excitable tones that brought his better-half on the run, fearful that he had suddenly been taken with a relapse.

"For the land's sake, Cyrus, what's the matter?" she asked.

"Matter!" gurgled the old man. "Everythin' is the matter. That nephew of ours is gone plumb crazy."

"Why, Cyrus, what do you mean?"

"What do I mean? Look at that advertisement. Ten dollars sunk by that boy in the most ridiculous advertisement I ever read in my life. Ten dollars spent in advertisin' sand-glasses, which he calls egg-clocks. Why, anybody knows them sand-glasses were made to b'ile eggs with. But they're out of use for that purpose these ten or more years past. Nobody wants them no more. What good does it do to advertise sich things? I'll be the laughin' stock of the town. Besides, I ain't got \$10 or even \$5 worth of them things in stock, and I'll bet there ain't another store that's got one on 'em. And see what he's sellin' 'em for. Three cents. Three cents, Cynthia, and they cost me seven, wholesale, fifteen years ago. A clear loss of four cents on each glass that he sells, if he sells any, not to speak about the price of the advertisement. And that's what that boy calls advertisin'. Drawin' trade. Cynthia, get my clothes. I'll go right down to the store and put a stop to this sort of thing. That boy would bust the store up in a week. And I was thinkin' of goin' to the Berkshire Hills and leavin' him in charge."

"You can't go to no store to-day, Cyrus Leggett," said his wife, "and you know it. You can't walk 'cross the room, let alone go out."

"But that boy will ruin me."

"Nonsense! He won't do nothin' of the kind. You kin stand a loss of ten dollars, can't you? Didn't he collect \$2,500 for you that you let hang on in spite of all I could say to you? A boy who kin do that in such a short time

is got a good head for business. You said so yourself. You told me he was a wonder."

"So he is at collectin', but he kin lose it all in no time runnin' sich monkey-doodle advertisements in a high-priced paper. It ain't common-sense, nohow, that advertisement. Nobody wants sand-glasses, and if they did it's ridiculous to sell 'em at less than half price. I thought that boy could run the store, but he can't run it nohow. I kin see that now."

Mrs. Leggett finally succeeded in soothing her agitated husband, but he couldn't get over the shock of that advertisement.

He read it over and over again, grumbling to himself.

"The idea of wastin' all that expensive space over sand-glasses. And not a single word about the stock we have for sale. The dry goods, hardware, groceries, notions, agricultural implements, ship chandlery and the rest of the stuff on hand. And the idea of callin' them things egg-clocks. They ain't clocks at all. A clock has a face, with the hours marked on it, and hands to p'int to 'em, and wheels and springs to make it go. Them things are only glass thingembobs—two glasses j'ined together in the middle with a stem to let the sand through a little at a time. All the time they'll tell is three minutes and a half—nothin' more nor less. That boy is crazy. Jest wait till he comes home to dinner," and Mr. Leggett nodded his head in a determined manner.

Billy, however, didn't come home to dinner that day, nor to supper, either.

He went to a restaurant.

Perhaps he had a suspicion of what would happen if he did.

The real reason was because he couldn't leave the store any longer than he could help.

There was a rush of customers that was new to the establishment in the last five years at least.

He had had both of the show-windows cleaned out of the stuff that usually filled them.

In their places he had the two clerks place certain up-to-date hardware, and other articles in demand.

In the center of both windows were eggs in saucepans, boiling away at a great rate, over oil stoves, the water being replenished, hot, from a cooker inside to prevent the boiling from stopping, and tiny sand-glasses stood all about.

For the first time in fifteen years there were crowds in front of the window of Leggett's General Store.

And customers flocked inside to purchase sand-glasses at three cents, but before the most of them left they bought many other things that attracted their attention—many of which no other store had kept for years, but which, nevertheless, were good in their line and which people could readily be talked into buying.

The two clerks and Billy were kept on the jump a l day.

Nearly every sale was a cash one, and nothing was charged except to an old and steady customer, and only a few of them called.

If Mr. Leggett could have looked into the cash-till when the store finally closed he would have gasped with astonishment to think that it really represented one day's sales.

He was in bed and asleep, however, when Billy got home,

and found his aunt waiting to learn why he had not been home to his meals.

"Couldn't leave the store long enough to get home, Aunt Cynthia," replied Billy.

"The land's sake! Why not?"

"Too much of a rush."

"Rush of what?"

"Customers. The store has been crowded all day."

"Do tell! Crowded all day. Why, I ain't heard Cyrus say in ten years that he had a real crowd. What brought the crowd?"

"My advertisement in the Times this morning. Uncle read it, didn't he?"

Mrs. Leggett looked solemn of a sudden.

"I should say he did, and he most had a fit over it. He wanted to go right down to the store and do somethin', jest as if he could git out of his chair without I held on to him. Do you mean to say that advertisement about egg-clocks drew a crowd to the store?"

"If it didn't I don't know what did. We made more sales, and cash sales at that, to-day than we have done in nearly a week since I've been in the store."

"Well, well! Cyrus was awful mad about that advertisement. He said it wouldn't have been so bad if you had put in about the dry goods, and the hardware, and all the rest of the stock he has on hand; but for you to spend ten dollars advertisin' less than five dollars' worth of sand-glasses, and then sellin' 'em at four cents less than cost, made him think you were downright crazy. I'll allow that I didn't understand what you expected to make out of it," said Mrs. Leggett.

Billy laughed.

"Uncle Cyrus is 'way behind modern methods of getting business," he said. "I advertised the sand-glasses in a kind of unique way to attract attention to the store, and I offered them below cost as a kind of bargain-counter attraction, and also to get rid of them. Three cents apiece for them is better than to keep them lying around in the cellar, accumulating dust and occupying room, isn't it? Although Uncle Cyrus has lost about five dollars on the original wholesale price of years ago, he is really four dollars in pocket. The four dollars is better than one hundred odd sand-glasses, for which there is really no call nowadays. We had a crowd around both show-windows all day, and we did a land-office business, all things considered. That advertisement has paid for itself several times over already, and it has called the attention of a lot of people to our store, who never would have come there but for that advertisement. In the morning, when Uncle Cyrus gets up you can tell him what I told you, and to prove my statements there's a memorandum of the cash and charge sales we made to-day. You can see that the bulk is cash. If uncle isn't satisfied from that that I've pulled in a big bunch of trade with that advertisement, then I don't know what will convince him."

CHAPTER X.

BILLY'S METHODS CONTINUE TO PAN OUT.

The two clerks were surprised at the success of Billy's advertisement, but they couldn't help approving of it, though it gave them so much unusual work.

However, they did not expect the rush would continue. Nevertheless, the store did a considerable trade on the following day, and the store windows continued to attract many people.

After all, there was nothing extraordinary in seeing eggs boiling away at a great rate, but such a spectacle in a store window was novel enough to draw the curious.

It doesn't take a whole lot to interest people on the street.

Of course, all the storekeepers in the neighborhood heard about what was going on at Leggett's, and many of them went personally to see the window show, simple as it was.

They had noticed the egg-clock advertisement before, and laughed at it.

It wasn't a bit like Cyrus Leggett to do such a thing as that, and they wondered who had put the idea in his head.

Probably half the people who bought the sand-glasses wondered, when they got home, why they had purchased them.

They didn't really want them, though they would be handy for the purpose they were intended for.

Three cents was such a small price that they were all satisfied they had got a bargain.

Those who bought other things at the regular retail prices thought they had got bargains in them, too.

The impression began to prevail that Leggett was going out of business, and was selling out everything below cost.

The result was, lots of people who attended the store went back to see what else they could pick up cheap.

Billy didn't go home to dinner that day, but he got home to supper as usual.

He carried a memorandum of that day's sales with him to show his uncle.

Mr. Leggett heard from his wife that morning all about the rush of customers at the store the day before, and he couldn't understand how such an advertisement, which was absurd in his eyes, could attract a crowd, unless they imagined that the owner of the store had gone crazy, and they wanted to see if that was really the case.

The amount of money taken in staggered him, but he was delighted, of course.

He waited impatiently to see Billy at noon, to talk with him about the matter, and when he didn't come home he could hardly content himself to wait till supper-time.

Then Billy showed up with his memorandum of the cash taken in that day up to half-past five.

Mr. Leggett was curiosity itself, and asked so many questions that Billy hardly had a chance to eat his supper and reply to them at the same time.

However, he managed to satisfy his uncle that the advertisement had proved a winner, and easily got permission to try it on again.

Billy's advertisement on the following week began with the following legend:

"Before you buy elsewhere, see if Leggett hasn't got it."

This time the boy advertised another bargain article.

He had found a lot of mouse-traps stowed away in the cellar that the old man had evidently forgotten all about.

They were old-fashioned, and not sold any more, but they were just as effective for catching mice as the more improved article.

They had cost Mr. Leggett seventeen cents apiece, and he used to sell them for a quarter when anybody asked for one.

Billy figured that it would be well to get rid of them at any old price, so he advertised them for five cents, as long as they lasted.

He had the show-windows dressed in different and attractive shape again, but left a space in the center of each to put something to attract curiosity.

He went to an animal fancier's in town and borrowed the use of two fine Maltese cats.

He placed one in each window, and above a swinging sign: "The Original Mouse-trap!"

Piled around he placed samples of the five-cent mouse-traps he advertised.

He drew crowds again all that week and sold a lot of regular up-to-date goods in all branches, and also worked off a lot of stuff that had been a dead-letter in the store.

The Times had given a free local paragraph about Leggett's unique egg-clock the previous week.

The editor considered it as "news," in a way, but doubtless his chief object was to encourage Leggett to put another \$10 advertisement in his paper.

As the second advertisement was forthcoming, he put in another paragraph about the two Maltese cats, describing them as really fine felines worth looking at, and that there was no doubt they beat all modern inventions as mouse-catchers.

Nellie Carter read the notice.

Being fond of cats, she was curious to see these two Maltese specimens.

It also offered her an excuse to call on Billy, and to tell the truth she was more interested in Billy than she was in the cats, which was saying a good deal.

When she entered the store, after admiring the cats in the window, she found Billy and the two clerks busy waiting on customers.

She waited till Billy was at liberty and then went up to him.

He was delighted to see her, and showed it.

"Those are lovely cats in your windows," she said. "Where did you get them?"

Billy told her, and he also said it was his idea to put them in the windows to attract attention.

"Dear me! how clever you are!" she exclaimed, with a smile.

"Thank you for the compliment," replied Billy. "One has to think up schemes to make business these days."

Then he told her about the egg-clock idea of the previous week.

"Father noticed it in the paper and thought it a clever advertisement. He wondered who proposed it to Mr. Leggett."

Billy told her that the advertisement, like the present week's one, was entirely his own conception, and in line with his ideas of catchy advertising.

As customers were waiting to be served, Nellie said she would not detain him, but would look for him to call on her on the following week, as he had promised to do.

Before she left he told her about the adventure he had had with the two rascals, and afterward with Thorndike, on the night he called on her.

She was indignant at Thorndike's conduct, and said that she and her parents had dropped the boy entirely, much to his parents' regret, but they couldn't but admit that their son had given good cause for their attitude.

No one knew that Mr. Thorndike said to his son about his actions on the cliff, but the young man didn't seem to care a whole lot for the opinion of his parents.

They had spoiled him, and were now beginning to reap the results of their foolish fondness for their only child.

Mr. Leggett examined the memorandum of cash sales at the store each day when Billy brought it home to him, and listened with remarkable patience to the boy's statements of the changes he had made in the store, and the revolutionary methods he proposed to adopt if he was permitted to go ahead.

Business was clearly so much more satisfactory under Billy's management that Mrs. Leggett insisted that her husband go to the Berkshires and leave everything to their nephew.

"There's no use talkin', Cyrus Leggett," she said, "Billy has a business head, even if he ain't more'n a boy, and lacks your experience. I kin see he's doin' what you ought to have done long ago. There wasn't no reason for you lettin' the store run down. I never could understand why it did, but I am beginnin' to see now. You ain't up-to-date. The world is changin' all the time, and you can't do business nowadays, the way it used to be done, and make money. That boy is up to the times. He ain't got no old-fashioned notions to cling to. He sees things as they are now, while you look at 'em the way they used to be. That's the hull thing in a nutshell. 'Cause I'm a woman you never would listen to me, and I have too much to attend to anyway to look after your business, too, but I reckon if I'd been you I'd done a hull lot different than you have."

Mr. Leggett made no reply.

He hated to admit that anybody knew more than himself how to run a general store.

After all, it wasn't that he didn't know how to run such a store, but that he should have weeded out the general character of his establishment when he saw the town was growing and merchants with long heads were stepping in and taking business away from him.

When Billy said that he was going to keep on advertising to suit himself, unless he was stopped, his uncle told him to go ahead and do as he pleased.

"Your aunt says you're right, and backs you up. I'll allow that so far you've made good. If you bust the store up in the end, I can't help it. Cynthia and you'll be the chief losers, for I ain't got long to live, anyhow," he said.

"Not long to live!" said Billy, with a grin. "You'll be alive and kicking ten years from now, perhaps longer. If I live as long as you are likely to do, altogether, I'll consider myself lucky. When you get back from the Berkshires, you'll be as chipper as a colt, and you'll find the store as chipper as yourself."

CHAPTER XI.

THE ATTEMPTED BURGLARY AT THE STORE.

Billy hired a stalwart colored man, dressed him like a dude, and had painted on the back of his light coat, "Before you buy elsewhere see if Leggett hasn't got it."

All the ducky had to do was to promenade the business street like a gentleman, and he attracted a lot of notice.

The boy yanked his uncle's old-style advertisement out of the Argus and replaced it with the same legend, nothing more, and paid a little higher price to have it printed next the local news items.

He reduced his six-inch advertisement in the Times to three inches, double column, and ran it every other day.

Every week he had a big bargain printed under the legend, which he had adopted as a trade-mark.

Already he had changed his original plans to make the store a one or two article shop.

He intended to gradually merge it into a five-and-ten-cent store, for there wasn't one in town, and none nearer than Portland.

The two anchors and piles of rusty chains he had had removed to the back yard where there already was a lot of similar truck, and he intended soon to have the front of the store repainted and the windows remodelled.

At length Mr. Leggett was well enough to walk over to the store.

It happened to be on the afternoon following one of Billy's bargain advertisements.

The boy had offered a stove-pipe he found in the cellar at half price.

In one window he had a bust of Henry Clay, and in the other a bust of Andrew Jackson, each surmounted by an old-fashioned plug hat.

Each bore the words: "The stove-pipe of our daddies."

In a semi circle around the busts stood highly polished short lengths of stove-pipe marked at the bargain price.

Mr. Leggett's eyes bulged when he saw the curious spectators blocking up his windows.

He wondered what was there to attract so much attention.

He pushed his way forward and soon discovered the cause.

He stared at the picture and was not much impressed.

Indeed, he felt chagrined to see such monkey-doodle business in his windows.

He had a very grouchy look on when he entered the store.

He soon forgot his grievance in the sight of so many people purchasing goods of Billy and his four clerks, for the boy had to hire two extra hands to handle his expanding trade, besides a young girl at the notion counter, and a cashier.

Old Jones, who used to have an easy time making deliveries of goods, now had to hustle around, even with a boy to help him.

He intended to complain to Mr. Leggett when he got back to the store.

He had been with Leggett since the old man went in business, over twenty years since, and he didn't like the new order of things.

Mr. Leggett walked through to the door of his office and stood there looking on at what he never expected to see in his store.

He was half bewildered at the change which had taken place since he had been ill.

Small hardware that he had kept out of sight on his

shelves was displayed in baskets, with the prices attached in plain figures.

The notion counter, too, was covered with samples of new goods, mixed with old.

The old was all marked down, for Billy believed in getting it out of the way.

People flocked to Leggett's to buy things that were a cent or two cheaper than at other stores, and often bought articles that were dearer instead.

It would take a page of small type to analyze the old man's thoughts, so we won't attempt it.

Billy walked over and asked him what he thought of things.

"I've pulled trade, haven't I?" he said.

His uncle allowed that he had.

"I haven't time to talk with you just now. Go in and see the bookkeeper. He will tell you all you want to know," said Billy.

"Seems to me that there cashier gal is an extravagance. Mr. Flint," that was the bookkeeper, "always took in the cash," said the old man.

"He couldn't attend to his books if he did that now. The cashier is a necessity or I wouldn't have her," said Billy.

"What did you do with them anchors, and that chain which was out front?"

"They're in the yard."

"You'll never sell 'em there."

"I'll get rid of them after awhile, and all your ship chandlery stuff that's in the cellar. We don't want to deal in such merchandise any more."

Billy spoke as if he was the managing partner, instead of, as yet, merely the old man's representative.

His uncle said nothing.

He felt as if he was only second fiddle in the business now.

When he got home he had a long story to tell his wife.

He didn't like the way things were going, though he was making money faster than he had done in fifteen years or over, for that matter.

Business at the store was running on a principle he was unfamiliar with.

He felt out of place there he told his wife.

"Our nephew is the whole thing, Cynthia," he said. "He bosses 'round as if he owned the shop, and everybody takes their hat off to him, quicker than I ever seen it done to me, and he's only a boy. Cynthia, the world is runnin' different these days. When a man begins to get old he ain't in it no more."

Mr. Leggett shook his head sadly as he thought of the good old times when boys didn't amount to so much as they did now.

And he disapproved of the idea of girls being employed in a store, too.

"The place for gals is to home, helpin' their mothers," he said. "I never expected to see gals workin' in my store, and now Billy has two on 'em—one at the notion-counter and one takin' cash. Jest think, Cynthia, the money comes in so fast we have to have a gal to take it in and make change. Old Flint used to do that for me, but he can't tend to that and the books no more."

"Are you goin' to make Billy your partner before you start for the Berkshire Hills, Cyrus?" asked his wife.

"I s'pose I might as well if you're willin'. He's as good as a partner now. I reckon when I get back I won't know the store at all. He says he's hardly begun the changes he expects to make."

Billy came home to supper, as usual, and then went back.

At nine o'clock he and the two clerks who were now employed evenings, closed up.

When Billy had gone a block he remembered that he had forgotten a package of groceries his aunt had asked him to fetch, so he went back to the store.

The only light in the place burned over the safe, and that could not be seen from the street.

The grocery department was at the back of the place, and Billy had left the package on the counter.

He didn't think it necessary to strike a light, as he knew just where it was.

So he made his way back to the rear of the store.

The package was just where he left it, and he picked it up.

At that moment he heard a suspicious noise at the door, which opened on the yard.

He listened and was soon convinced somebody was trying to force an entrance.

Nobody but a thief would try to do such a thing.

The door was both locked and bolted, but as it was only a wooden one it would not long resist the efforts of a man provided with suitable tools.

Billy went close up to the door and found that the intruder was boring holes with an auger.

After finishing the second he paused, and the boy heard him talking to a companion.

There were evidently two of them.

What was he to do?

At that hour Main street was pretty well deserted.

Unfortunately, there was no telephone in the store, as Mr. Leggett didn't want one.

Billy made up his mind then and there to order a telephone put in next day.

But that was like closing the barn door after the horse had got away.

The question was how was he to frighten away or capture these thieves now?

There were a score of things in the store that would answer for a weapon against the rascals—an axe-handle, for instance.

There was a bundle of them close at hand.

Billy lost no time in getting one, then an idea struck him and he went over to a corner and got a length of clothes-line.

He made a slip-noose at the end, then he got the lantern that was used in the cellar and lighted it.

He held the light so it would shine from the side.

The auger was at work on the sixth hole made in a circle.

The thieves intended to make a hole large enough to enable one of them to shove his arm through and unlock and unbolt the door.

Billy softly removed the key as a precaution and waited with the noose in his hand.

The lantern shed a dim light over the spot where the auger was working, and Billy watched its movements.

The circle of holes was finally completed, and then a

short, thin saw took the place of the auger and sawed through the space between the holes.

A smart tap with the knuckles dislodged the circular piece of wood and it fell in on the floor.

A hand was then inserted and the fingers felt for the key.

Billy held the noose so that the man unconsciously put his hand through it.

The boy then sprung his little trap by pulling the noose tight around the man's wrist and hauling his arm partly through the hole.

The fellow uttered an exclamation of surprise and consternation, and tried to jerk his arm free.

Billy, however, tied the line fast to the handle of the door and thus made a prisoner of the burglar.

CHAPTER XII.

BILLY GETS A HALF INTEREST IN THE STORE.

The pinioned rascal struggled violently, but in vain, to free himself.

He swore lustily, and from the talk that Billy heard through the door it was clear that the rascals did not suspect there was any one in the store, but that the chap who was in trouble had been caught by some burglar-preventative device placed at the door.

Billy did not waste much time, but started off to find a policeman.

As the chance of finding an officer was rather indefinite, he entered the drug store at the corner and telephoned the facts to the station-house.

He was told that three officers would be sent to the store at once.

So Billy returned there to await their appearance.

A man, who he suspected had been investigating the front entrance, slunk away at his approach.

In the course of fifteen minutes the policemen appeared.

Billy led them around to the yard and there they found the prisoner fast to the door.

His companion had disappeared.

A lighted match proved him to be Sloppy, but Billy recognized him as simply one of the toughs who attacked him on the wharf, and, moreover, he suspected that he was one of the two men who tried to hold him up the night he visited the Carters.

He returned to the store, released the rope and Sloppy was taken charge of by the officers.

After nailing a piece of board over the hole, Billy accompanied the policemen and their prisoner to the station-house, where he charged the fellow with attempting to enter the store to commit a burglary.

When he reached home his aunt had gone to bed, and it was not till the following morning at breakfast that he told her of the attempt made the previous night to rob the store and how he had frustrated it.

He appeared at the magistrate's court about eleven o'clock and testified against Sloppy.

The fellow offered no defense and was held for trial.

Two days later Billy's uncle presented him with a half interest in the business and shortly afterward started for the Berkshire Hills, to remain till he had fully regained his health.

Before Mr. Leggett left, Billy paid his second visit at the Carter home, and was as cordially received as before.

On this occasion no attempt was made to hold him up when he left to return to his home, for he had not been followed.

Soon after his uncle's departure, Billy introduced the five-and-ten-cent plan, devoting the front part of the store to it, while he divided the back part into grocery, hardware, house furnishing and fancy goods departments.

The latter was an addition Mr. Leggett had not dealt in.

He placed a clerk in charge of each section, employing a young lady to look after the fancy goods and three small girls to wait on the customers at the five-and-ten-cent counters, devoting his own energies to the general supervision of the whole store.

He put a standing advertisement of three inches, double column, in the Times, which he headed with his trade-mark—"Before you buy elsewhere see if Leggett hasn't got it." Underneath it, "The only five-and-ten-cent store in town. Special bargains in our grocery, hardware, house-furnishing and fancy goods departments every week. Watch our advertisement every Wednesday morning. Leggett's, Main street."

A fire having nearly gutted a neighboring dry goods store, Billy bought out the damaged stock and had it removed to a vacant store, which he rented for a week.

He sent there what was left of Mr. Leggett's stock of dry goods and then advertised a "Fire sale!"

His chief object was to get rid of his old stock of dry goods, for he didn't intend to carry on that branch of business any more, as he couldn't do it to advantage.

The sale was a financial success, the store being visited by hundreds of women, the wives chiefly of the factory workers, who were anxious to secure bargains.

No indication was given in the advertisement that the fire sale had any connection at all with the Leggett store.

Billy managed it as an independent scheme, and one week sufficed to turn the trick to his perfect satisfaction.

The change in the way that business was being conducted at Leggett's had naturally attracted the notice of the other merchants on the street, and as it affected the trade of some of them, those who suffered didn't relish the innovation.

They wondered who was putting old man Leggett up to this new wrinkle.

Comparing notes, the storekeepers began to see that the methods at the general store had begun to change since the arrival in town of Mr. Leggett's nephew.

That set them to thinking that Billy Bland was at the bottom of the matter, and yet they could not believe that an eighteen-year-old boy, without business experience, was capable of bringing about such radical changes.

As nearly all the storekeepers in the neighborhood were on speaking terms with Leggett, several of the more curious called to see the old man as soon as they heard he was on his pins again.

The first dropped in the very day that Leggett left for

the Berkshire Hills, so he failed to see the storekeeper, but he saw Billy instead.

"Yes," replied the boy to the inquiry, "I'm Mr. Leggett's nephew."

"Who is running the store while Mr. Leggett is away?"

"I'm running it," replied Billy.

"You are!" exclaimed the visitor, in some astonishment.

"Seems to me you're rather young to assume such a responsibility."

"I'm growing older every day," replied the boy, with a smile.

"I suppose you mean you are running the place under the advice and direction of Mr. Flint, the bookkeeper?"

"No, sir. I am running this store under nobody's direction, not even my uncle's. I am the sole boss till he gets back."

"Are you responsible for the new way the store has been run these last three weeks?"

"Yes, sir, I am. See anything wrong in my methods?"

"They are very radical."

"The store needed radical treatment. When a business drifts into a Rip Van Winklish condition any one can see its finish unless the owner wakes up and does something quick and sharp to remedy things. You're a storekeeper yourself so you ought to appreciate what I'm driving at."

Billy spoke like a shrewd, up-to-the-minute business man, and the visitor woke up to the fact that if he was a boy in years he was a whole lot smarter than many men twice his age.

It dawned upon his mind that a dangerous rival had invaded Main street, and it behooved the business people of the neighborhood to keep their eyes on the boy.

Young Bland's methods were already producing results that nobody had looked for at Leggett's, and the more experience he accumulated the more of a competitive factor he was likely to become.

The visitor went away very much enlightened, and soon spread the news that Mr. Leggett's eighteen-year-old nephew was the cause of the awakening of Leggett's store.

Those storekeepers in particular who felt they had been hurt by the aggressive tactics recently put in force at Leggett's did not like the new trade-mark at the head of Billy's advertisements—"Before you buy elsewhere see if Leggett hasn't got it."

A week later they liked it less when this trade-mark appeared in big poster type on the dead walls all over town.

Billy also hired a reliable youth, furnished him with a wagon and paint and brushes, and sent him out along the roads to paint the same legend, adding to it the words, "Five-and-Ten-Cent Store, Main Street, Barclay."

The young storekeeper had got into communication with the largest novelty houses in the country, and received their catalogues, with their wholesale quotations.

Every week he received something new, and these articles he advertised at a special bargain price for one or more days, after which the regular price was charged.

He watched certain business rivals closely, and when they introduced something new he duplicated it right away and offered it at a lower price.

One day, as Billy was going home to lunch, he saw a man hanging out a sign at the corner store, opposite Carter, Thorndike & Co.'s.

It bore these words: "Selling Out Below Cost—Fixtures for Sale."

Billy was so astonished that he went inside to inquire the reason of it.

It was a drug store, and the corner was one of the best in the business district for such an establishment or, in fact, for any kind of a retail business.

It seemed to him that nobody who knew the least about running a business could fail to make things go there.

He saw one of the partners and learned that the lease would expire in a month.

The firm was going to leave town and start again in Portland in a bigger way.

"What's the rent of the store?" asked Billy.

The druggist told him.

"Who is the landlord?"

"Nelson Carter, of Carter, Thorndike & Co., across the street."

"Thanks!" replied Billy, who didn't lose a minute in hurrying into the big dry goods store and inquiring for Mr. Carter.

He was admitted to his private room and received a cordial greeting.

He got down to business at once.

"I understand that you own the corner building over the way?" he said.

"I do," replied the merchant.

"You know, I suppose, that the present tenants of the store are giving up business?"

"Yes, I have been so advised."

"Have you leased the store yet to any other party?"

"No. It will not be vacant for a month yet."

"Will you lease it for five years at the present rental?"

"No. I expect to ask more."

"How much more?"

"Do you know somebody who wants to lease it for five years?"

"Yes; I want to lease it myself."

"You do!" exclaimed the merchant, somewhat surprised.

"Are you thinking of leaving your uncle and going into business for yourself?"

"I am already in business. My uncle and I are equal partners in Leggett's."

"Indeed! I was not aware of that."

"Yes, sir, but don't say anything about it. I wish the matter kept private for awhile."

"Surely you are not thinking of moving the store up to the corner. The place wouldn't accommodate one-half of your business."

"No, sir; Leggett's Store is a landmark in this town, and it wouldn't pay to move it. I want the corner for another purpose."

"Well, Bland, you can have it for five years at the present rental, but I wouldn't lease it to anybody else on those terms," said Mr. Carter.

"No, Mr. Carter, I am not asking you to do that. I don't want such a favor. It would interfere with the object I have in view. What terms did you propose to ask a new tenant for your corner store?"

"I expected to ask \$450 more for a three years' lease—that is \$100 more the first year, \$150 for the second and

\$200 additional for the third. If a five-year lease is preferred, I should want an increase of the same ratio."

"All right, sir. I'll take the store from you for five years on those terms. Have the lease made out to Leggett & Bland. Want a deposit?"

"Not from you. I will attend to the lease right away and notify you when it is ready for you to sign," said the merchant.

"I shall want the privilege of sub-letting it for any kind of retail business but dry goods and the kindred lines that you handle here," said Billy.

"Very well," replied Mr. Carter.

Then Billy said good-bye and went to his dinner.

CHAPTER XIII.

HUSTLING UP A BUSINESS.

On the following morning a man came into the store and asked for Billy.

He was invited into the private office.

"I understand that you have leased the drug store at the corner, which will shortly be vacated by the present tenants," said the caller.

"Yes, sir, though the papers are not signed yet," replied Billy.

"Are you going to run a business there?"

"I have not yet decided what I will do, sir."

"Not decided what you will do, yet you have leased the store?"

"That's right. The lease is a valuable article. I could easily sell it at a good profit."

"I'd like to take it off your hands."

"What kind of business have you in mind to utilize the store for?"

"I think it would be a good location for a tobacco and cigar store."

"I agree with you. You can have a five-year lease of it for \$1,000 in addition to the rent."

"One thousand dollars! That's a pretty stiff figure."

"Not at all. It's worth it."

"What's the rent?"

Billy told him the terms he had agreed to pay for the store.

"The rent is very reasonable for such a prominent corner. If I owned it I would ask more. If you have any doubts about that corner not being one of the best in town for the business you spoke of I'll lease it to you for one year at \$200 premium, with privilege of renewal at \$250 per year for the other four," said Billy.

"Then it would cost me \$1,200."

"It would that way."

"Won't you take \$900 for the five years?"

"No, sir."

"But you may not find anybody else willing to sublet the store at such a premium as you ask."

"I'll risk it. If I don't find a party before the first I'll open a cigar store myself and run it in connection with this store."

The man said he'd consider the matter, and went away.

He was back in a couple of hours and closed with Billy on his terms.

Billy grinned as he handed the \$100 deposit to his bookkeeper and told him to enter the transaction as a cash deal on the books.

The bookkeeper was astonished when the young storekeeper explained the little coup.

"You're the smartest boy I ever heard tell of," he said. "By the way, how is it that you make a firm transaction of it? You might have made the \$1,000 on an independent basis."

"No, Mr. Flint, I am doing nothing independent of Mr. Leggett. He presented me with a half interest in this business, and so any outside deal I pull off shall benefit him as well as me," replied Billy.

"He didn't make any mistake in taking you in for nothing," said Flint. "This business is already paying three times as much as it did under his management. And from the looks of things it will do still better."

"I expect that it will," said Billy, walking away.

It was about this time that Sloppy's trial came on.

He sent word to Thorndike that he wanted to see him.

The dudish lad responded rather unwillingly, but was afraid to refuse.

Sloppy told him that he must furnish a lawyer to defend him or he'd tell things that Thorndike wouldn't like to be known.

The young man realized that he had better do it.

The lawyer he hired couldn't save Sloppy, and that tough was sent away for ten years.

Mr. Carter opened his eyes when Billy told him he had transferred his lease to a man named Brown for \$1,000, who intended to run a cigar store on the corner.

"Upon my word, young man, there is nothing slow about you," he said.

"I hope not, sir."

"No, I've heard about the way you've pulled up your uncle's business. You seem to have original ideas about advertising that pan out in good style. I'd like to have an advertising man as good as you seem to be."

Billy had a long talk with Mr. Carter, and he learned something he didn't know before, and that was that Carter, Thorndike & Co. didn't pay more than half as much as he did for space in the Times.

The reason was because they used about fifteen times as much as he did, and they contracted for it by the year.

When he left he went over to the Times office and saw the proprietor.

After a talk with him, he made a contract in the name of his firm for a certain amount of space for one year, and got it at a reduced rate.

It was understood that any additional amount he might need, if he found toward the end of the year he had not bought enough, he was to have at the same rate.

The end of summer was approaching and for the first time Billy decided to take an afternoon off and go and see a ball game.

He invited Nellie to accompany him.

He did not ask for Mr. Manson, the manager, but bought a couple of reserved seats in the small, covered stand.

The contest was between the Barclay team and the nine from Eastport.

It was a kind of rocky game alongside the kind of baseball he had been used to.

Billy enjoyed it, however, for it put him in mind of old times when he cavorted on the diamond.

After the game, he escorted Nellie home and remained at her house to dinner.

On the following day, Mr. Leggett returned from the Berkshires, fully recovered.

Billy had kept him fully informed concerning business at the store, and he had become quite reconciled to the way matters were going.

On Monday he turned up at the store, but he found things so systemized that he had nothing to do but play boss.

In a few days he caught on to the run of affairs, and Billy found he could be relied on to forward all plans he proposed.

On the first of the ensuing month Billy learned that the store adjoining would be vacant in a month.

He proposed to rent it, place the four departments in it and devote the whole of the old store to the five-and-ten-cent business, which he was itching to enlarge and make the principal business of the house.

His uncle told him to go ahead and rent the store, and he did.

During the intervening thirty days he ordered his additional stock of cheap stuff for the five-and-ten-cent counters.

He timed the arrival of the goods to suit, and when the annex was ready for the firm to move in, everything was ready in twenty-four hours for the public.

An enlarged advertisement in the Times, and a duplicate in the Argus, informed everybody in town that hereafter Leggett's would carry the largest stock of five-and-ten-cent goods east of Portland, which was saying a whole lot for a town the size of Barclay.

If there was any bluff in Billy's statement he was prepared to back it up.

The five-and-ten-cent idea had appealed to the people of the town from the moment Billy introduced it on a reduced scale.

All that ever worried Billy was the fact that some enterprising individual might cut in on his idea and go the whole hog on it, as he wanted to do at the start, but couldn't manage it.

No such dangerous rival had turned up to upset the plucky boy's plans, and now he felt that Leggett's had the field copped.

He was able now to make good his trade-mark, for if there was anything in the small goods line in Barclay that Leggett's couldn't supply, too, and probably cheaper than elsewhere, he wasn't aware of the fact.

There were two ship chandlery stores near the waterfront and to one of them Billy had sacrificed all the ship chandlery the old man had been trying to dispose of for years.

The rest of the miscellaneous truck in the cellar he had worked off at bargain rates, or sent to an auction-house.

He now had a large cellar to use as a storage-room for goods received, and another to use as a packing and shipping room.

He accepted charge accounts only from the responsible old customers and new ones he knew to be good.

The house, however, was now understood to be a cash store.

Old Jones and his wagon had to be supplemented with two others, for the accommodation of which a barn and stable was built in the yard behind the original store.

These three wagons were up-to-date covered ones and bore the words on both sides—"Leggett's. Before you buy elsewhere see if Leggett hasn't got it."

Leggett's was cutting into the trade of many stores that had started and thrived on the old man's back-number methods in force before Billy turned things inside out.

Billy had collared a big grocery trade from the working people by giving away premiums.

He advertised that every person who bought groceries from the store would get a ticket for each ten-cent purchase, two tickets for a twenty-cent purchase, and so on, upward.

These tickets were redeemed according to a premium list, and the plan made a hit among the working people particularly.

Billy's force of clerks had doubled, and with the addition of the annex he had to hire more.

Girls were in the majority, but Mr. Leggett had become reconciled to it.

Even with double floor space the young storekeeper began to feel cramped again before the fall was over.

The grocery department occupied half of the annex, and as Billy wanted to expand his other departments somewhat he engineered until he succeeded in securing the floor above the annex to which he had a stairway built in the store.

He removed the housefurnishing goods department there and laid in a large and varied stock of moderate-priced goods, for he catered to the ordinary people principally.

With two dozen clerks and salesgirls on his pay-roll, as against two men when he took hold of the business, and three bookkeepers and five girls in his counting-room, as against Mr. Flint, formerly, things were surely booming nowadays at Leggett's.

CHAPTER XIV.

BRAVE BILLY BLAND.

George Thorndike went to Bowdoin College at the opening of the scholastic term, but he failed so badly in his examinations that he was sent home to be coached up so that he would be able to meet the requirements of the college.

This was a great disappointment to his father, himself a graduate of the institution, but it didn't seem to worry his son a whole lot.

A tutor was hired to prepare him to take the mid-term examinations at Christmas, and he found it hard work to learn all that was necessary for him to know.

He had made one or two attempts through his mother to try and square himself with Nellie Carter, but the girl wouldn't have it.

She declared that she couldn't trust him, and was through with him for good.

These rebuffs soured him greatly.

And what was worse, he knew the girl was on the friend-

liest of terms with Bland, and he was wildly jealous of Billy.

He felt that if he could do up his successful rival it would be a matter of intense satisfaction to him, but he didn't know how to accomplish it.

He had not the courage to attempt anything himself, for he feared the consequences if he was detected.

He made overtures to Doyle, but that ruffian, while willing to tackle Billy if he saw a good chance, was not anxious to take chances after the fate which had overtaken Sloppy, and from which he had narrowly escaped himself.

One day, Thorndike learned that Billy was going to take Nellie to a birthday party to which he also had been invited.

The idea that Billy was about to be introduced among the first people of the town, and the probability that his rival would escort Nellie around all winter while he was away, if he succeeded in entering college, made him half frantic.

He didn't know that Billy was half owner of the thriving Leggett store.

Much less did he dream that the boy was the chief factor in building that well-known establishment up to its present efficiency.

In fact, only a limited number of persons did know Billy's actual standing in Leggett's.

Thorndike supposed he was merely a clerk there, so it made him mad to think that a common clerk should be admitted to the exclusive set to which Nellie and he himself belonged.

He hurried around to the house of one of his toady friends and told him that Nellie Carter was coming to the party in question, with a common store clerk.

His friend appeared to be astonished at the news.

"How do you know that?" he said. "You must be mistaken. Miss Carter's people wouldn't let her associate with any common person."

"Oh, the fellow has done the family a service, and they are trying to return it. Now what we want to do is put all the fellows and girls wise to the low origin of this chap, so that they will not notice him when he comes. When he finds he is out of place he will probably have sense enough to sneak."

"Who is he, anyway?"

"His name is Bland. He has been a common ballplayer and is now employed as a clerk in Leggett's store."

"A clerk in that cheap store?" cried Thorndike's friend. "That settles it. We don't want anybody like that in our set."

"I should say not," said Thorndike.

The two lost no time in visiting around among their friends and spreading the news.

The boys were disgusted, while the girls elevated their noses and declared that Nellie Carter must be crazy to think of introducing such a person at the party.

Nellie's chum, Bessie Baker, heard the circumstances and was so surprised that she rushed around to see Nellie and get an explanation.

After telling her story, Bessie said:

"It can't be true that the boy you are coming with is a common store clerk, Nellie?"

"Who says he's a common store clerk?" demanded Nellie, indignantly.

"All the girls I have seen say so. They say if he comes they will not accept an introduction to him, or notice him in any way at all."

"Who has circulated the story among the girls?"

"Tommy Dorrington told it to Edith Cook, and Elsie Smith heard the same thing from Frank Carr. All the girls seem to know about it, and they are mad over it."

"The story is a malicious falsehood," said Nellie, with flushed face and sparkling eyes. "Mr. Bland is a gentleman, and even if he were a clerk I should respect him just the same. But he isn't a clerk at Leggett's. He is the managing partner of the firm, and the smartest boy in Barclay."

"Then I don't understand why that story was started about him, nor who started it," said Bessie Brown.

"I can guess who started it."

"Who?"

"George Thorndike."

"Why should he?"

"For reasons I do not care to explain."

"Perhaps he is jealous because you are not coming to the party with him."

"He spread the story to make trouble for me. You know I have dropped his acquaintance for good and sufficient reasons. If the rest of our set knew him as well as I do they'd drop him, too."

As the party was coming off the following evening, Nellie deemed it her duty to visit some of her young lady friends and disabuse their minds of the report they had heard about Billy.

She sent Bessie around to other houses on the same errand.

Their mission was only partially successful.

Finally, at half-past eight next evening, an auto dropped Billy and Nellie at the house where the party was to take place.

Billy was duly introduced to the assembled company.

He was received with a cold stare by the boys and by half the girls.

Nobody offered him a friendly hand, except the young hostess and her mother.

Billy, in spite of his natural liveliness, felt like a cat in a strange garret until Nellie rejoined him and took him around and began to introduce him, personally.

The boys hardly acknowledged the presentation, while many of the girls slipped out to avoid meeting him.

Those girls who accepted an introduction found Billy as nice as they could wish, and just as polite and gentlemanly as any of the boys of their set.

By degrees he made good progress with the girls, who couldn't help liking him; but the boys held aloof.

They continued to give him the cold shoulder, and Billy couldn't understand why the sentiment against him among the boys was so general.

So the evening wore on until a later comer arrived.

He had met Billy at Mr. Carter's house and, moreover, he knew the boy's actual standing in the business community.

He took Billy in tow at once, and as he was a leader in the set, he soon began to set matters right among the boys.

Thorndike, seeing how things were going, strove to counteract the favorable sentiment that was now setting in in Billy's favor.

Billy was beginning to enjoy himself at last when the fire-alarm bells sounded, and when the young people ran to the windows they saw that a residence up the block was on fire.

There was an immediate rush by the boys up the street and Billy went with them.

The upper story of the building was burning, the flames as yet being chiefly confined to the front.

As it was after midnight, only two or three persons had so far been attracted to the scene, one of whom had turned in the alarm from a corner box.

If any one was in the house they had not awoke to the realization of their peril.

The two men the boys found on the lawn said they had rung the bell furiously and pounded on the front and side doors for some minutes, but no one inside had responded, so they guessed everybody was away.

Under the circumstances this conclusion seemed reasonable.

As the fire gathered headway above, Billy thought it advisable to try and make sure nobody was in the house.

He rushed to the side door but found it locked, and then he tried the kitchen door with no better success.

The windows were all fast, too, so he could find no avenue of entrance.

A shade tree close to the house threw a thick branch within reach of the upper story where the fire was, but Billy didn't think of going up there.

What he wanted to do was to reach the windows of the second floor.

Without a ladder this did not seem to be possible.

While he was considering the matter he heard a sudden childish shriek above, and heard numerous ejaculations from the gathering crowd.

Looking up he saw a little white-robed girl of ten years leaning out amidst the smoke that was issuing from the burning room.

Behind her all was red and glowing, while the flames were licking at the woodwork of the other window near her.

She was screaming in terror, looking down at the crowd with staring eyes.

Apparently there was no way of reaching her and her fate seemed sealed.

At least such was the opinion of the crowd.

The greatest excitement ensued.

Then it was that Billy thought of the tree.

This, however, pointed toward the blazing window and not the one at which the child stood.

On the spur of the moment he made a jump for the trunk and was up in the lower crotch in a moment or two, then he began mounting the overlapping branch as nimbly as a young monkey.

The crowd perceived his purpose and cheered him on, though they saw his course was taking him to the burning window.

"I'm going to save you, little girl," he said, encouragingly to the imperiled child, as he drew near the window, a couple of yards away from her.

By this time all the girls from the party, with hoods and divers articles thrown across their shoulders, had reached a point of vantage across the street.

The tree being bereft of leaves at that season of the year they could plainly see the figure of brave Billy Bland climbing to the rescue of the little child, but though the fire threw a fitful glare upon him, he was not recognized even by Nellie until one of the boys rushed up to the group and said that the boy in the tree was Bland.

"Oh, my gracious!" exclaimed Nellie, her heart beating quicker when she realized the dangerous feat her escort was attempting. "Is it really Mr. Bland?"

"Yes," replied the boy, all right.

"Isn't he brave?" cried the hostess of the party, and all the girls agreed that he certainly was.

But Billy was only just reaching the point where his pluck was to be put to the test.

Climbing the tree was a simple matter, though it was an inspiring sight under the circumstances to the beholders—the difficult part was to reach the girl, and that could not be done without forcing a passage through the blazing window.

Putting one foot on the coping, and holding himself in position with one hand on the branch, Billy forced the window-sash up its full length.

Flame and smoke rushed into his face and hid him for a moment from the crowd.

When the smoke lifted a bit there was no sign of the brave boy.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

Nellie uttered a half shriek, for she thought Billy had fallen into the blazing room.

Never till that thrilling moment had she realized how much she had learned to care for him.

Her young heart went right out to him at that moment.

"Save him, oh, save him!" she cried, half-hysterically, and burst into tears.

"There he is!" cried the girls around her, in a chorus of excitement.

Billy had suddenly appeared beside the dazed and terrified child.

At that moment the clang, clang of the first fire-engine was heard coming around the corner a short distance away.

Toot! toot! toot! sounded another from the opposite direction, two blocks away.

Billy grabbed the child in his arms.

The crowd cheered vociferously.

Then he disappeared with her from the window.

To return to the window through which he had entered was impossible now.

The flame and smoke were belching from it in great volumes.

The smoke was also pouring out of the window from which he had snatched the child.

Escape could only be made, if at all, through the burning room to the entry of the third floor.

As the room was almost a sea of fire by this time, this looked well-nigh impossible, but it had to be attempted, and at once.

Getting down on his hands and knees, Billy dragged himself and the child to the burning door he saw ahead.

It was not locked, and reaching up he opened it with a desperate effort, as the fire and blistering heat enveloped him.

Out into the entry he crawled with his hat and clothes ablaze, and his face blistered all over.

He dashed as far as the stairs and fell.

He beat out the fire which had caught the child's night-gown.

He tore off his hat and, rolling over, put out the fire on his own clothes.

Then he grabbed the unconscious little girl again and started to rise to descend the stairs.

The effort was beyond him.

He had gone the limit and fell across the head of the stairs, unconscious.

There the two were found a few minutes later in the glare of the fire by the firemen, who had been apprised of his heroic act, and beat their way into the house through one of the ground-floor windows.

They were carried down and outside, and thence to the adjacent house.

The firemen in the meanwhile searched the back rooms on the third floor, and found a maid unconscious on the floor of her sleeping apartment.

There was no one else in the house.

The engines soon got busy and several streams were turned on the fire, which had reached the roof and lighted up the neighborhood.

Inside of fifteen minutes the firemen got the blaze under control, and the safety of the lower part of the house was assured.

In the meantime, Nellie was wild over Billy's fate.

She had seen him carried senseless and motionless from the building with the little girl and she imagined he was dead.

Her grief astonished the girls around her and they tried to comfort her.

It wasn't Mr. Bland now, but "Billy," she repeated over and over until one of the boys brought news that Bland had come to his senses, and while seriously burned was in no danger of his life.

Thorndike heard about the scene Nellie had created.

"What a fuss she's making over that fellow!" he sneered. "He's nobody."

But he found only one or two of his special toadies who agreed with him now.

All the rest of the boys were loud in their praises of Billy's heroic act.

Most of them had learned, too, that Billy wasn't a common clerk, but a partner in the much-talked-about "Leggett's" store.

They were ashamed now because they had treated him in such an ungentlemanly way that evening and were eager to make amends for it.

Billy was taken to the hospital, after being treated by the ambulance surgeon, and there he passed the night and several days in addition, suffering considerably from his burns, but bearing the pain like a true hero.

On the morning after the fire the Times came out with

a graphic account of the fire, under the caption of "Brave Billy Bland," and other sub-titles.

The whole town had Billy on the brain that morning.

When Mrs. Leggett called her nephew as usual that morning, and he did not respond, she went up to his room and was surprised to see that he had not come in all night.

She supposed, however, that he had been persuaded to pass the night at the Carter home, for she knew the Carters thought a great deal of Billy.

The first intimation she had that anything was wrong with her nephew was when her husband unfolded the morning paper and saw the caption of the fire story staring him in the face.

He called her from the kitchen in great excitement, and she listened while he read the account of the blaze.

After breakfast, Mr. Leggett started for the hospital, and on his arrival was admitted to see his nephew, whose face was wholly hidden by bandages, except where his eyes, nose and mouth peered forth.

Mr. Carter, at his daughter's express request and also because he liked the brave boy, called at the hospital later, on his way to business, and when he reached the store he telephoned home that Billy was doing nicely.

Nellie, accompanied by her mother, called at the hospital in the afternoon and saw the bandaged hero.

The girl brought a bouquet of flowers, and she told Billy how sorry she was to see him suffering, and how the whole town was talking about his gallant act.

Later on the parents of the rescued child called to see him and express their gratitude.

They had been to Belfast at the wedding of a relative and only returned that afternoon, but had learned of the fire from the papers the gentleman, whose name was Peabody, purchased on the train.

Mr. Peabody was president of the First National Bank of Barclay, and one of the solid men of the town.

He declared that Billy was a hero, and that neither he, his wife or little girl would forget what they owed him.

Two days later little Edna Peabody was brought to see her rescuer, and she kissed one of his bandaged hands and told him how much she thought of him.

Not a day passed while Billy was at the hospital that Nellie didn't call and bring flowers, and her presence greatly cheered the brave boy.

At the end of a week Billy left the hospital, but he still bore numerous marks as evidence of his heroism.

The store had gone on all right during his absence, for Mr. Leggett saw to it that things went on along their accustomed lines.

The customary special advertisement, however, did not appear, as the old man was unable to wrestle with it, and he decided that it was better to omit it than make a bull of it.

That made no difference in the trade that week, though.

The news had been published that Billy was the managing partner of Leggett's, and that excited considerable interest and brought not a little custom to the store.

Billy called on Nellie on the evening of the day he left the hospital and received a great welcome.

During the evening he told her that he was greatly touched by her kindness in visiting him and bringing the flowers.

She blushed and said it was nothing, in an embarrassed way, because he was a brave boy and deserved it.

Billy was smart enough to perceive that there was an undercurrent to her feelings, and the strong love his young heart felt for the lovely girl betrayed him into a confession of the fact.

She blushed redder than ever and looked away.

"Have I offended you, Nellie, by my frank declaration? If I have I am sorry, and I promise never to mention the subject again," he said, earnestly.

"No, no," she fluttered. "You could not offend me."

"Then may I hope that you are not wholly indifferent to my regard for you?" he continued, eagerly.

She remained silent, while her heart beat like a trip-hammer, and her bosom heaved under her excess of emotion.

"Do you love me, dear?" he whispered, in a tone that thrilled her.

"Yes, yes, with all my heart. I do love you very dearly."

Then—well, maybe he kissed her.

At any rate, they were supremely happy the rest of that evening, and when he finally tore himself away their lips met in a long, rapturous kiss, at the front door.

It was fortunate, perhaps, for Thorndike that he managed to skin into college on the first of the year, for he got the icy mitt from the girls and boys of his set when they came to understand a few things.

Nellie confessed to her mother that she loved Billy, and Mrs. Carter did not chide her for it.

She told her husband, and he said that Billy was all right, and would make his way to the topmost round of the ladder of success, so that it was probable he would make an excellent match for their daughter.

Nothing more was said on the subject by Nellie's parents.

Billy was blissfully unconscious that they knew all about his love for their daughter, for Nellie did not tell him she had told her mother, as a good and dutiful girl ought to do.

A year later, however, Billy mustered enough courage one day to approach the dry goods merchant on the subject, and the answer he got made his heart glad.

Later he asked Mrs. Carter for her daughter and was told he could have her when they were both older.

At last, when Billy was twenty-two and Nellie was twenty, they were married in style at the church her parents attended and went away on their honeymoon.

That is all, reader.

Brave Billy Bland was now the recognized head of the much-expanded "Leggett's," which occupied three stores combined on Main street, and two of the floors above them—the business he had hustled up.

Next week's issue will contain "TAKING A BIG RISK; OR, THE DIME THAT LED TO RICHES."

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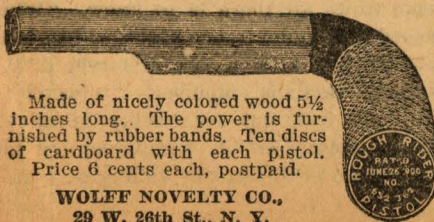
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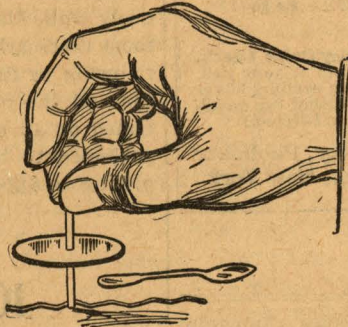


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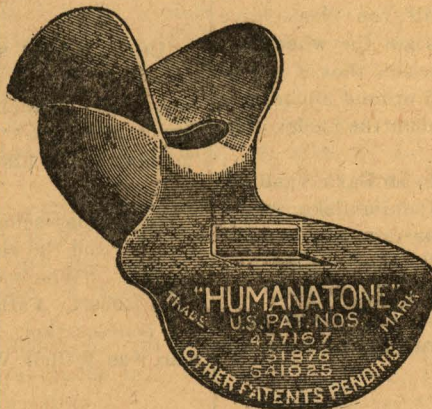
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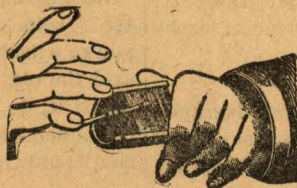


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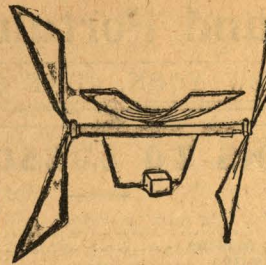
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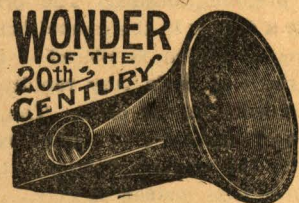
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GOOD STORIES.

In the province of Alberta, Canada, insurance companies insure farms against hail. In the year 1909 246,999 acres of farming land were fully covered by this form of insurance, and 48,732 acres were partially insured. The rate varies from thirty to forty cents an acre.

A little girl in Tiverton, England, lately entered a fruit store, and said to the shopkeeper: "Will you please give mother a nut to put a spider in, as baby's got the whooping-cough?" It is a popular belief in that section that if a live spider is imprisoned in a nutshell, and tied around an infant's neck, the whooping-cough will disappear when the spider dies.

The oldest woman in the world is said to be Baba Vasilika, who resides in the little Bulgarian village of Pavilsko, where she was born in May, 1784. She is therefore almost one hundred and twenty-seven years old, and still takes a kind and motherly interest in her eldest boy, aged one hundred. He works in the field, cultivating a little farm, and is the main support of his aged mother. He is determined not to waste his youth in idleness.

The ancient "dew ponds" of England have their modern counterparts on the Rock of Gibraltar, where drinking-water is obtained by the condensation of the abundant dew in especially prepared basins. The primitive process consists in making a hollow in the ground, and filling the bottom with dry straw, over which is placed a layer of clay. On a clear night the clay cools very rapidly, and the dew is condensed into the water in the basin. The pond is improved by putting a layer of asphalt or Portland cement under the straw. At Gibraltar the present practice is to use wood instead of straw and sheet iron instead of clay.

Many persons are of the impression that wireless telegraphy is particularly subject to "tapping," but, as has been pointed out by Marconi and others, no telegraph system is absolutely secret. Any one familiar with the Morse code can read ordinary messages entering any telegraph office. At Poldhu, on a telephone connected to a long horizontal wire, the messages passing on a government telegraph line a quarter of a mile away can be distinctly read. It has been shown that it is possible to pick up a distance, on another circuit, conversation which may be passing through a telephone, or telegraph, wire. On one occasion an investigator was able to interfere, from a distance, with the working of the ordinary telephones in Liverpool.

Toothless saws have been in use cutting armor plate for a number of years. The theory of the action is abrasion by local fusion, due to the very high speed of the disk, causing so many thousand inches of surface to impinge on the metal undercut that the material acted upon is heated at the point of contact to a temperature approaching if not equal to the fusing point. It appears as if a very small portion of the metal being cut immediately in the neighborhood of the point of contact is first melted and at once rubbed off, thus exposing a fresh surface to the frictional action, and that this process goes on continuously while the disk is working. The temperature of the disk must necessarily be much lower than the work in contact with it owing to its large surface area, and when it is considered that all the frictional energy of the rotating disk is concentrated on an extremely small area of contact in the material subjected to its action the results obtained are not so surprising as appear at first sight.

JOKES AND JESTS.

Mr. De Seiner (on being introduced to adored one's mother) —Pardon me, madam, but have we not met before? Your face seems strangely familiar. Adored One's Mother—Yes; I am the woman who stood up before you for fourteen blocks in a street car the other day while you sat reading a paper.

"Uncle Mose," said a drummer addressing an old colored man seated on a drygoods box in front of the village store, "they tell me that you remember seeing George Washington. Am I mistaken?" "No, sah," said Uncle Mose. "I useter 'member seein' him, but I done fo'got sence I jined de church."

The Sunday-school lesson had been about Elijah's ascent in a cloud, and the children could not remember the name of the prophet. "Who was it went up to the sky in a cloud?" asked little Robert. Father, who had been paying little attention to the conversation, vouchsafed the information, "I think the man was Wilbur Wright."

Mike, having been sent by his master to deliver a hare in a hamper, set out on a long journey. Feeling tired and inquisitive, he sat down and opened the hamper to see the hare. In an instant the hare was running down the road. Mike was very upset at this, but suddenly he shouted after it: "It's no good; you don't know where to go. I 'ave the h'address on this 'ere 'amper."

Rastus had been caught red-handed. "Poaching again, Rastus?" said the colonel, gravely. "I am afraid, Rastus, that you're a bad egg." "Yassuh, dass what I is fo' sho', cunnel," said the old man. "I's jest a plain bad aig, cunnel." "So you admit it, do you?" demanded the colonel. "Yassuh—I admits it, cunnel, becuz ye know, cunnel, dem bad aigs nebbah poaches, suh," said the old man.

Little Augustus Johnson had learned some things about the face of a clock, but not quite all there is to know. "What time is it, 'Gustus?" asked his employer one night, to test him. "It's jes' 8 o'clock," said the boy, after a careful survey of the clock. "No, you're wrong," said his employer. "It won't be 8 o'clock for quite a while yet, not for twenty minutes." "Bofe hands is p'inting to eight, 'jes' as straight as dey can p'int," said the boy stubbornly. "If dey ain' telling de truf, I cyant help it."

IN THE TOILS

By Alexander Armstrong

It was in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eighty, and in the city of St. Petersburg, Russia, that the following events took place, though the true names of the actors have been suppressed for obvious reasons.

Percy Dunham was a young American gentleman connected with the diplomatic corps at the capital of the Czar's dominions, and was as well informed concerning the movements of that terrible order—the Nihilists—as an outsider could well be.

He had met a young lady, the daughter of a Russian nobleman, by the name of Paulina, and, with the ardor of youth, had fallen madly in love with her at first sight, his passion being returned with a fervor quite equal to his own.

There was a man, a Russian, connected with the newspapers of the city, whom Percy had met several times at balls and receptions, whom he could not but regard with distrust, notwithstanding that the latter always treated him with the utmost apparent consideration and respect.

This man was called Julian Ivanhoff, and was considered a shrewd journalist and a perfect man of the world, possessing, with his other accomplishments, a liberal supply of that assurance which makes the good newspaper writer.

Percy distrusted this man, as we have said, partly because he was not above suspicion of being connected with the Nihilistic movement, but principally on account of his attentions to the beautiful young Russian.

Our hero could have stood the man's other faults, but this one was too much for him, and he fretted under it like a man in torture.

That Paulina was true to him gave him considerable comfort, but he was uneasy, nevertheless, for in a city like St. Petersburg, there were means enough at hand for a man of evil purpose to carry out any base designs he might have conceived.

Percy's suspicions were only too well founded, for not only had the man arranged a plot to carry off the young lady, but had also planned to cause his young rival's ruin.

He increased his attentions to the latter, and for a time completely disarmed his suspicions, and made him think for a brief spell that he had misjudged the man.

One night Julian approached Percy, and after indulging in a few pleasantries, said carelessly:

"By the way, Percy, my boy, what do you say to spending an evening with me at a certain club which I occasionally visit?"

"Where is it?"

"Right down the grand avenue there, near the bridge. It's quite a 'tony' place, lots of wine you know, plenty of wit circulating; all the best people go there."

"It is a political club, is it not?" asked our hero.

"No, no, certainly not. Old Petrowsky goes there sometimes. This is a ladies' night, and I shouldn't wonder if you should see a certain——"

"I will go with you," answered Percy quickly, understanding from the man's hint that Paulina would be there, and not caring to have Ivanhoff the only man to pay her his attentions.

"That's right, let us be off so as not to miss the best fun. The ladies retire early, you know."

"Is full dress necessary?"

"Not absolutely. Come along as you are. You look handsome enough to pass anywhere, not excepting a loyal reception itself."

The young men were standing at the entrance of a large banquetting hall, whence came the sound of clinking glasses and noisy laughter.

"I hear no sounds indicating the presence of ladies," said our hero, as Julian drew aside the heavy hangings.

"No, nor I. They must have departed. That's too bad."

Percy was not altogether sorry that Paulina was not present, though he did not then distrust that she had never been in the place at all, and followed his companion into the room.

A long table, covered with a snowy cloth, on which were placed numerous decanters and glasses, stood in one corner of the room, surrounded by a party of gentlemen.

There was a shout of welcome when Julian entered, and every glass was raised aloft, while all united in pledging him.

He put up his hand, and there was an instant silence, which he broke by saying:

"This is my friend; he is an American, and you therefore know how to receive him."

There was another shout at this, and a further drinking of healths, though the sanitary conditions of many of the revelers would have been improved had they drank several glasses less than they had already indulged in.

During the confusion, Julian pushed Percy into an unoccupied chair at the head of the table, taking one further down for himself.

Several songs, flavoring strongly of revolutionary tendencies, were sung, the whole party roaring out the choruses, and between times toasts were given, which were not altogether pleasant to Percy's ears.

He drank with the rest, except when the distasteful toasts were given, at such occasions merely raising his glass to his lips, but not touching the contents.

At last one man, more intoxicated apparently than the rest, arose, and, filling his glass, said:

"Our friend at the head of the table does not seem to relish our sentiments, and I therefore propose to give him a toast which he cannot certainly refuse to drink."

"Let us have it then," cried Percy, raising his glass with the rest.

Our hero glanced at Julian, but the man was apparently very busy with one of his friends and did not observe the look which was directed toward him.

"This is the toast," continued the man, "death to all tyrants and rulers, be they kings, emperors, presidents or czars."

Every man there with the exception of Percy drained his glass to the bottom and uttered a shout when the toast had been drunk.

Percy grew red in the face, and, setting down his wine untasted, said fiercely:

"I shall drink to no such sentiment as that, gentlemen."

"Not if we leave out the president."

"No."

"You will never drink destruction to the czar!"

"Never!" cried Percy, springing to his feet. "I know now where I am—in a den of Nihilists!"

"From which you can never escape!" hissed Julian, rising from his seat.

"Traitor!" cried Percy, "I see your purpose now, but it shall avail you nothing. I will denounce you to the police."

"Upon him, friends, and cut the braggart to the earth!" shrieked the spy.

"The Nihilists, for such they were, made a rush at Percy, but the latter, with his back against the wall, stood confronting the crowd, with a brace of revolvers in his hands, and glaring at them with defiance in his eye.

"The first man that comes a step nearer, dies!" he said, in low, determined tones.

The assailants paused for an instant, but Julian cried out in angry voice:

"Upon him, I say, he is a spy of the police."

The enraged crowd dashed forward muttering curses, and many a keen dagger flashed in the light of the countless wax candles on the walls.

A flash and a report followed the attack, a scream of agony being heard at the next instant.

"Kill him," replied Julian, "the rascal has shot me."

Percy braced himself more firmly against the wall, and fired into the crowd.

As he fired the second shot, however, he felt the wall behind him suddenly give way, and before he could recover his balance he was falling through space, all around being inky darkness.

His fall was considerable, but he alighted, contrary to his expectations, upon some soft substance like hay, which yielded to the weight of his body.

Then he heard the sound as of a heavy door slammed, and presently he felt himself seized in the strong grasp of two or three powerful men and was hurried away, the darkness still being impenetrable.

He was dragged along to a considerate distance, when he was suddenly manacled, hand and foot, and cast into a small cell, lighted by a single lamp, the heavy doors closing upon him with a harsh, grating sound, the turning of a key in the lock, and the shooting of great bolts following in quick succession.

* * * * *

The beautiful Paulina Petrowsky was one of the many attractions at a state ball that evening, and in the pauses of the dance she was sitting in a secluded corner fanning herself and listening to the music, which at that distance sounded most soft and melodious.

Suddenly a page approached and dropped a paper into her lap, departing upon the instant.

"Percy Dunham is in great personal danger, but he may yet be saved. A guide will conduct you to his prison. Follow the messenger who leaves this note."

The billet was unsigned, but Paulina, never distrusting but that her lover was in imminent peril, arose hastily, and wrapping a thick cloak about her slender form, left the ball-room.

She had no difficulty in finding the page who had delivered the message, the boy being at the entrance when she arrived there. He pointed to her own carriage, and getting in, she was driven rapidly away in the direction of the river.

After passing the grand bridge, the vehicle suddenly stopped, and a man opening the door, requested the lady to alight.

She did so, when she was quickly seized and hurried away before she could raise an alarm.

Her abductors, for there were two of them, carried her into a house close at hand, being admitted by a rough, heavily bearded man, who spoke German and looked like a butcher.

"Have you seen him?" he asked of the men.

"No, have you?"

"Not I; what are your orders?"

"To await him here. He was to meet us upon our arrival."

"He is not here yet, and they say there has been an arrest up the street."

At this moment a man wrapped in a cloak hurriedly entered the house.

"Have you done my commands?" he asked.

"What is the countersign?"

"Neva."

"Right. The lady is here."

"Give her to me. My carriage is without."

"One moment; the ring."

"Behold!"

The stranger extended one hand, upon the forefinger of which was a large seal ring, the device being a skull and cross-bones, with a word engraved beneath.

That word was a significant one, and was

"NIHIL."

"Enough," said the two villains. "You will find her yonder," pointing to a door.

The man quickly entered, and, whispering a few hurried words into Paulina's ear, bore her away without resistance to the carriage.

He had barely driven out of sight before five or six other men rushed in in great haste and addressed the German.

"Fly for your life!" they cried. "Our band has been broken up and the leader killed. The police have made several arrests, and the Czar is once more safe."

"Julian is killed, you say?" said the two abductors in great surprise.

"Yes, shot down by the young diplomat."

"Death and destruction! We have just delivered the young lady into the hands of a man wearing his ring and giving the pass-word."

"He is an impostor, for our leader is dead. He is the police spy, Ruloffsky. After him, we may yet be in time."

They hastily left the house, taking the direction the carriage had followed, but they had hardly gone twenty paces, before they ran into a party of soldiery.

The German was luckier than the rest, and escaped, but the two accomplices of Julian Ivanhoff were cut down while resisting capture, and the others were seized.

* * * * *

Percy Dunham had been in his dungeon about ten minutes, when he heard the bolts withdrawn and two men entered, knocked off his manacles and hurried him outside.

They took him along a corridor dimly lighted by gas, and had proceeded about thirty feet, when one of them suddenly called to him to look back.

He did so, when the man raised his hand and was about to sink a dagger in his neck, the point just touching his flesh, when there came a sudden flash.

With a shriek the man fell to the stone floor, the weapon dropping from his nervous grasp, and clattering upon the hard stones.

The other man was about to finish the work himself, when a third party appeared and struck him to the earth.

"Fear not," said the newcomer, "I am Ruloffsky the police spy. Your newspaper friend is dead, but I have his secret and must hasten. Quick! Follow me, and I will lead you safely out."

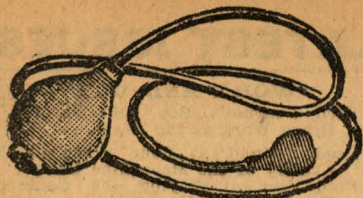
Ten minutes later Percy was at his hotel, his conductor having suddenly disappeared.

Half an hour thereafter, he was summoned to Paulina's residence, where he learned of her danger and her miraculous rescue by the agent of the police.

It seems that the latter had wormed himself into the secret conclave of the Nihilists, having set in motion a plan by which to cause the arrest of all the members of that branch of the order—not the main one, however.

The journalist's plans were to have Percy murdered and Paulina abducted, but he had met his own death at a time when success seemed assured.

Percy did not long remain in Russia, but bearing away his lovely bride, returned, early last month, to the land of his birth, where he now lives to tell the tale of how he happily escaped when "In the Toils of the Nihilist, Julian Ivanhoff."



MYSTERIOUS PLATE LIFTER.—Made of fine rubber, top with bulb on one end and inflator at other. Place it under a table cover, under plate or glass, and bulb is pressed underneath, object rises mysteriously; 40 ins. long. Price, 25c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



JUMPING CARD.—A pretty little trick, easy to perform. Effect: A selected card returned to the deck jumps high into the air at the performer's command. Pack is held in one hand. Price of apparatus, with enough cards to perform the trick, 10c.

M. O'NEILL,
425 W. 56th St., N. Y.



DEVILINE'S WHISTLE.—Nickel plated, polished; it produces a near-piercing sound; large seller; illustration actual size. Price, 12c., by mail.

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MICROSCOPE.—By use of this wonderful little microscope you can magnify a drop of stagnant water until you see thousands of crawling insects; is also useful for inspecting grain, pork, linen and numerous other articles. This little instrument does equally as good work as the best microscopes and is invaluable to the household. Is made of best finished brass; size when closed one inch by two and a half inches. Price, 30c.

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347 Winthrop St.,
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MANY TOOL KEY RING.



The wonder of the age. The greatest small tool in the world. In this little instrument you have in combination seven useful tools embracing Key Ring, Pencil Sharpener, Nail Cutter and Cleaner, Watch Opener, Cigar Clipper, Letter Opener and Screw Driver. It is not a toy, but a useful article, made of cutlery steel, tempered and highly nicked. Therefore will carry an edge the same as any piece of cutlery. As a useful tool, nothing has ever been offered to the public to equal it.

Price, 15 cents, mailed, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

HAPPY HOOLIGAN JOKER.

With this joker in the lappel of your coat, you can make a dead shot every time. Complete, with rubber ball and tubing.

Price, 15 cents, by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



CACHOO OR SNEEZING POWDER.—The greatest fun-maker of them all. A small amount of this powder, when blown in a room, will cause everyone to sneeze without anyone knowing where it comes from. It is very light, will float in the air for some time, and penetrate every nook and corner of a room. It is perfectly harmless. Cachoo is put up in bottles, and one bottle contains enough to be used from 10 to 15 times. Price by mail, 10c. each; 3 for 25c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

ROUGH AND READY TUMBLERS.

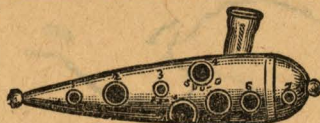


These lively acrobats are handsomely decorated with the U.S. flag and with gold and silver stars and hearts. Upon placing them upon any flat surface they at once begin a most wonderful performance, climbing and tumbling over each other and chasing each other in every direction, as if the evil spirit was after them, causing roars of laughter from the spectators. They actually appear imbued with life. What causes them to cut up such antics is a secret that may not be known even to the owner of the unruly subjects. If you want some genuine fun send for a set of our tumblers.

Price, per set, 10 cents; mailed postpaid.

A. A. WARFORD, 16 Hart St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

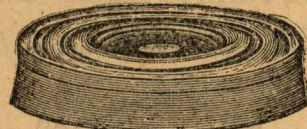
THE GERMAN OCARINO.



A handsome metal instrument, made in Germany, from which peculiar but sweet music can be produced. Its odd shape, which resembles a torpedo boat, will attract much attention. We send instructions with each instrument, by the aid of which any one can in a short time play any tune and produce very sweet music on this odd looking instrument.

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WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



DELUSION TRICK.—A magic little box in three parts that is very mystifying to those not in the trick. A coin placed on a piece of paper disappears by dropping a nickel ring around it from the magic box. Made of hard wood two inches in diameter. Price, 12c.

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The biggest sell of the season. A real cigar made of tobacco, but secreted in center of cigar about one-half inch from end is a fountain of sparklets. The moment the fire reaches this fountain hundreds of sparks of fire burst forth in every direction, to the astonishment of the smoker. The fire is stage fire, and will not burn the skin or clothing. After the fireworks the victim can continue smoking the cigar to the end.

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JAPANESE TRICK KNIFE.—You can show the knife and instantly draw it across your finger, apparently cutting deep into the flesh. The red blood appears on the blade of the knife, giving a startling effect to the spectators. The knife is removed and the finger is found in good condition. Quite an effective illusion. Price by mail, 10c. each.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

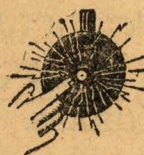
Good Luck Banks

Price 10 Cents



Ornamental as well as useful. Made of highly nicked brass. It holds just One Dollar. When filled it opens itself. Remains locked until refilled. Can be used as a watchcharm. Money refunded if not satisfied.

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347 WINTHROP ST.,
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ELECTRIC PUSH BUTTON.—The base is made of maple, and the center piece of black walnut, the whole thing about 1 1/4 inches in diameter, with a metal hook on the back so that it may be slipped over edge of the vest pocket. Expose to view your New Electric Bell, when your friend will push the button expecting to hear it ring.

As soon as he touches it, you will see some of the liveliest dancing you ever witnessed. The Electric Button is heavily charged and will give a smart shock when the button is pushed. Price 10c., by mail, postpaid.

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THE GREAT FIRE EATER.



A great Sensational Trick of the Day! With the Fire Eater in his possession any person can become a perfect salamander, apparently breathing fire and ejecting thousands of brilliant sparks from his mouth, to the horror and consternation of all beholders. Harmless fun for all times, seasons and places. If you wish to produce a decided sensation in your neighborhood

don't fail to procure one. We send the Fire Eater with all the materials, in a handsome box, the cover of which is highly ornamented with illustrations in various colors. Price of all complete only 15 cents, or 4 boxes for 50 cents, mailed postpaid; one dozen by express \$1.20.

N. B.—Full printed instructions for performing the trick accompany each box, which also contains sufficient material for giving several exhibitions.

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THE SURPRISE BOUQUET.

The best practical joke of the season. This beautiful button-hole bouquet is made of artificial flowers and leaves which so closely resemble natural flowers that not one person in a thousand would detect the difference. After placing the bouquet in your button-hole you call the attention of a friend to its beauty and fragrance. He will very naturally step forward and smell of it, when, to his utter astonishment, a fine stream of water will be thrown into his face. Where the water comes from is a mystery, as you can have your hands at your side or behind you, and not touch the bouquet in any manner. You can give one dozen or more persons a shower bath without removing the bouquet from your button-hole, and after the water is exhausted it can be immediately refilled without removing it from your coat. Cologne can be used in place of water when desired. We have many funny things in our stock, but nothing that excels this.



Price, complete in a beautiful box, with full printed instructions, 25 cents, or three for 60 cents; by mail postpaid.

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LOOK HERE!

SPLENDID PREMIUMS GIVEN AWAY FREE

Save the front cover page headings of *this weekly*, beginning with the issue dated March 10th, 1911, and ending with the issue of July 21st, 1911. No headings dated before March 10 or after July 21 will be accepted. Send us 25 headings within these 20 weeks and we will give you a valuable gift for them. The numbers need not be consecutive. This is not a competition. Any reader can get a premium. We will describe the premium in a later issue.

Each 25 headings will get you something you will like.

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FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher,

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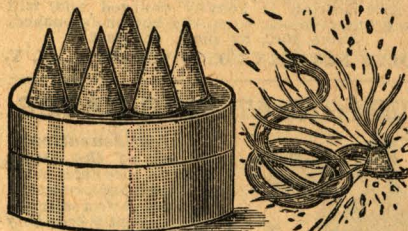
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Price, 5c., postpaid.

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Something entirely new, consisting of six large cones, each one nearly one inch in height. Upon lighting one of these cones with a match, you see



something similar to a 4th of July exhibition of fireworks. Sparks fly in every direction, and as the cone burns down it throws out and is surrounded with what appears to be grass; at the same time a large snake uncoils himself from the burning cone, and lazily stretches out in the grass, which at last burns to ashes, but the snake remains as a curiosity unharmed. They are not at all dangerous, and can be set off in the parlor if placed on some metal surface that will not burn. An ordinary dust pan answers the purpose nicely.

Price of the six cones, packed in sawdust, in a strong wooden box, only 10 cents, 3 boxes for 25 cents 1 dozen boxes 75 cents, sent by mail post paid.

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COMICAL RUBBER STAMPS.



A complete set of five grotesque little people made of indestructible rubber mounted on black walnut blocks. The figures consist of Policeman, Chinaman, and other laughable figures as shown in pictures. As each

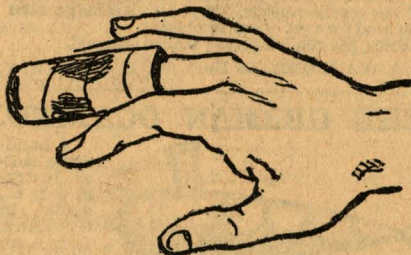
figure is mounted on a separate block, any boy can set up a regular parade or circus by printing the figures in different positions. With each set of figures we send a bottle of colored ink, an ink pad and full instructions. Children can stamp these pictures on their toys, picture books, writing paper and envelopes, and they are without doubt the most amusing and entertaining novelty gotten up in years. Price of the complete set of Rubber Stamps, with ink and ink pad, only 10 cents, 3 sets for 25 cents, one dozen 90 cents, by mail post-paid.

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THE BEST YET! RIGHT FROM THE MINT.—We sell you for 10c., postpaid, a real mysterious trick that can be done without practice. The outfit consists of 2 metal rings, a cover on which to do the trick, and the picture board which seemingly does it all. Take any coin, just place the ring over it, say "Go!" and it goes without touching it; say "Come!" and it comes back. Really clever, and your money back if you want it. Send for wholesale price.

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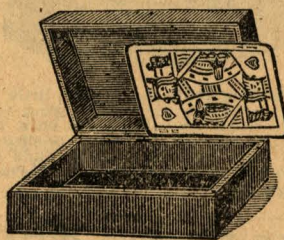


IMITATION CUT FINGER.—A cardboard finger, carefully bandaged with linen, and the side and end are blood stained. When you slip it on your finger and show it to your friends, just give a groan or two, nurse it up, and pull a look of pain. You will get nothing but sympathy until you give them the laugh. Then duck! Price 10c., postpaid.

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THE MAGIC CARD BOX.

One of the best and cheapest tricks for giving parlor or stage exhibitions. The trick is performed



as follows: You request any two persons in your audience to each select a card from an ordinary pack of cards, you then produce a small handsome box made to imitate pebbled leather, which anyone may examine as closely as they will. You now ask one of the two who have selected cards to place his or her card inside the box, which being done, the lid is shut, and the box placed on the table. You then state that you will cause the cards to disappear and upon opening the box the card has vanished and the box found empty. The other card is now placed in the box; the lid is again closed and when the box is opened the first card appears as strangely as it went. Other tricks can be performed in various ways. You may cause several cards to disappear after they are placed in the box, and then you can cause them all to appear at once. You may tear a card up, place it in the box, and on lifting the cover it will be found whole and entire. In fact, nearly every trick of appearance and disappearance can be done with the Magic Card Box.

Full printed instructions by which anyone can perform the different tricks sent with each box. Price 20 cents, by mail postpaid.

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- 650 Fred Fearnot's Road Riders; or, Rustling With Roughs.
- 651 Fred Fearnot and the Battery Boys; or, After the Wharf Rats.
- 652 Fred Fearnot's Clever Curves; or, Beating Out the Batsmen.
- 653 Fred Fearnot's Island Mystery; or, Camping in Canada.
- 654 Fred Fearnot's Boy Marvel; or, Bringing Out a Young Pitcher.
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- 539 The Liberty Boys Accused; or, Defending Their Honor.
- 540 The Liberty Boys' Best Battle; or, The Surrender of Cornwallis.
- 541 The Liberty Boys and Lightfoot; or, Dick Slater's Indian Friend.
- 542 The Liberty Boys' Hot Hunt; or, Running Down a Traitor.
- 543 The Liberty Boys and the "Old Sow"; or, The Signal Gun on Bottle Hill.
- 544 The Liberty Boys Driving Out the Bandits; or, Warm Work in Moomouth.
- 545 The Liberty Boys at Fraunces' Tavern; or, Ferreting Out a Wicked Plot.
- 546 The Liberty Boy and the Backwoodsmen; or, Joined with Brave Allies.
- 547 The Liberty Boys' Hiding-Place; or, Baffling Burgoyne.

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- 640 The Bradys and the Diamond Heart; or, The Mystery of a Mummy.
- 641 The Bradys' Red Glove Clue; or, The Secret Band of Seven.
- 642 The Bradys and the Man Next Door; or, The Mystery House on High Street.
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- 675 Left on Treasure Island; or, The Boy Who Was Forgotten. By Richard R. Montgomery.
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- 447 Young Wild West's Road Agent Hold-Up; or, Arietta Carrying the Mail.
- 448 Young Wild West and the Red Ranchero; or, The Plot to Burn a Settlement.
- 449 Young Wild West on a Puzzling Trail; or, Arietta's Nugget Clew.
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244 Dick, the Wall Street Waif; or, From Newsboy to Stock Broker.
245 Adrift on the Orinoco; or, The Treasure of the Desert.
246 Silent Sam of Wall Street; or, A Wonderful Run of Luck.
247 Always on the Move; or, The Luck of Messenger 99.
248 Happy-Go-Lucky Jack; or, The Boy Who Fooled the Wall Street Brokers.
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255 Johnny, the Parcel Boy; or, The Lad Who Saved the Firm.
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258 "Back-Number Bixby"; or, The Boy Who Was Up to the Minute. (A Wall Street Story.)
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261 Ed, the Express Boy; or, His Own Route to Fortune.
262 The Stolen Bonds; or, How Wall Street Will Made His Mark.
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266 \$50,000 from a Nickel; or, The Boy Who Was Lucky in Stocks.
267 Born Lucky; or, From Miner to Millionaire.
268 Hal Holman's Tip; or, Scooping the Wall Street Market.
269 A Boy of Business; or, Hustling for the Dollars.
270 Smart as They Come; or, The Boss of the Wall Street Messengers.
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284 A Boy With Ginger; or, The Lad Who Won the Dollars. (A Story of Wall Street.)
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